ENTERTAINMENT
PDI's man in Hollywood spends whole day with 'desperadas' of Wisteria Lane

WORLD/A10
Death toll in Iraq stampede climbs to about 1,000

NEWS/A21
FVR: GMA has won first round but it isn't over yet

NEWS/A2
Goodbye 'jueteng,' welcome 'Small Town Lottery'

Airline operators want a 'silent' Naia Terminal I

By Nikko Dizon

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

10 NGOs join hands to help Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu

By Gerry Lirio

Friday, September 3, 2004 • 32 pages / vol. 20 / no. 266
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High court upholds VAT

But TRO stays until final ruling

By Armando Nocum and Michelle V. Ramos

THE SUPREME Court ruled yesterday that the expanded value-added tax law, the centerpiece of the government's fiscal reform program, was constitutional "in its entirety."

But the government cannot yet implement the VAT law, which will further raise the prices of goods and services at a time of surging fuel prices.

The TRO (temporary restraining order) issued by the court on July 1 to block upon finality," Supreme Court public information chief Ishmael Khan Jr. told reporters yesterday.

Khan said the lower order would not be lifted until the court had ruled on any appeal against the tax ruling. Opponents of the law have 15 days to lodge an appeal.

Ruling on five petitions, the high court joined a Feeney order on the VAT law basis after its implementation two months ago.

The petitioners said the law was unconstitutional because it would allow the President the discretion to raise the VAT (10) to 12 percent from 10 percent starting January next year. They said the power to tax belonged to Congress.

Khan said the majority upheld all parts of the expanded tax, which

JAZZ CITY is reeling the blues as 80 percent of New Orleans, Louisiana, is still submerged in floodwaters from Monday's killer Hurricane Katrina.

Bush: One of worst natural disasters in US history

HUGE HOP An officer is lifted to safety by a Coast Guard helicopter the day after the horrific hit New Orleans.

AT A GLANCE

Louisiana

- Deaths: Fire chief said Barbara Lewis probably killed thousands of people in New Orleans—an estimate that, if accurate, would make the storm the country's deadliest natural disaster since at least the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Nation's chief said he'd be requesting offending to a presidential on evacuating the living, many trapped on rooftops and in attics.
- An estimated 80 percent of New Orleans is under water, up to 6 meters deep in places. Water is still rising as engineers struggle to plug a breach from the Mississippi River and Pontchartrain with giant sandbags.
- Author has have drawn up plans to move out the tens of thousands of people left in the city. Exes and all but abandoned the flooded capital. Many of the evacuees—including thousands more staying in the Superdome—will be moved to the Astrodome in Houston, 350 km away.
- U.S. Sen. Mitch Landrieu said 15,000 people have been rescued by boat and air.

AT A GLANCE, A12

NEW ORLEANS: With thousands feared dreamed in what could be America's deadliest natural disaster in a century, New Orleans' leaders all but surrendered the streets to floodwaters and began turning out the lights on the battered city... perhaps for months.

Looting spiraled as out of control on Wednesday (last Mayor Ray Nagin ordered the entire police force to abandon search and rescue efforts and focus on the looters, packs of thieves who have turned increasingly lawless.

Gunmen in the nearby city of Gretna held up a supply truck carrying food, water, medical supplies and pharmaceuticals, pressuring officials to ask police and the US Coast Guard to help evacuate a 2,200-bed hospital.

"We have to close it down because we can no longer ensure the safety of our patients or our staff in that hospital," said Steven Campanini, a spokesperson for Tenet Healthcare Corp.

He said there were about 400 employees and between 125 and 150 patients inside the hospital, which is not flooded and is functioning.

Earlier, Nagin called for an all-out evacuation of the city's remaining residents. Asked how many people had died, he said: "Monstrous, horrendous. Most likely, thousands."

With most of the city under water, Army engineers struggled to plug New Orleans' breached levees with giant sandbags and convert hangars, roads and factories into temporary shelters for the tens of thousands of evacuating people and practically abandon the below-sea-level city.

Nagin said there would be a "total evacuation of the city. We have to. The city will not be habitable for days or three months." And he said people would not be allowed back into their homes for at least a month or two.

If the mayor's dreak cull estimate holds true, it would make Katrina the worst natural disaster in the United States since at least the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, which had been blamed for anywhere from about 500 to 6,000 deaths. Katrina would also be the nation's deadliest hurricane since 1900, when a storm in Galveston, Texas, killed between 6,000 and 12,000 people.

Those who took shelter from the storm in New Orleans' Superdome

Bishop Cruz: President a puzzlement

By Christian V. Esguerra and Norman Bordadora

ARCHBISHOP Oscar Cruz has warned the next 21 months—when President Macapagal-Arroyo is supposed to be preoccupied running her impeachment—would be tumultuous because suspicions that she rigged the 2004 election results would remain.

"I am perplexed at the course, direction," Cruz said. "Now some [he said the solicitation in impeachment] but hey allies did precisely the opposite? Doesn't she know any more on her own party? That would be disappointing."

The archbishop, one of Ms Arroyo's few vocal critics among the clergy, told the Inquirer that, "Definitely, her governance will not be easy. The people's trust in her will be further eroded. The

Impeachment: Still a number of what ifs

By Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

THERE things happened in quick succession on Wednesday at the House justice committee hearing.

First, the committee voted that the Lozano complaint was not sufficient to substitute affair all.

What happens after this?

ANALYSIS

The simple answer may be found in Section 3 of Article XI of the Constitution.

"... The committee, after hearing, and by a majority vote of all its members, shall submit its report to the House ... together with the corresponding resolution. The resolution shall be calendared for consideration by the House within 10 session days from receipt thereof.

"A vote of at least one-third of all the members of the House shall be necessary either to affirm a favorable resolution with the Articles of Impeachment of the committee, or override its contrary resolution. The vote of each member shall be recorded."

But the question is really not that simple because there are a number of "what ifs" which can complicate matters.

To begin with, it is clear that the three votes taken by the committee on Wednesday did not end the impeachment process. The committee is commanded to submit his the consideration of the

Gloria saw it all on TV, says Palace

By Cil C. Catacutan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo had been glued to the beach while this week, monitoring the impeachment proceedings from her Malacañang office, Palace officials said.

The President's preoccupation with developments in the House committee on justice had prompted a number of last-minute cancellations of her activities outside the Palace.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President watched the public TV coverage of the opposition walkout on Wednesday and the derailing of Wednesday of all three impeachment complaints against her.

"We can't finish her for taking

Battle rages for 79 signatures toward final stand

By Michael Lim Ubac and Philip C. Tubeza

HOUSEMAJORITY lawmakers yesterday said the "tug of war" over the 79 signatures for prosecution in the House is plenary session on Monday remained fierce, with the number increasing and decreasing "by the hour."

But House Minority Leader Francis Escudero expressed optimism that the "final conflict" would end with the Senate sitting as an impeachment court to try President Macapagal-Arroyo. "We will make our last stand at the plenary," he declared.

At press time yesterday the prosecution team said nine more lawmakers would be added to the 79 who had endorsed the amended impeachment complaint.

The nine were identified as Representatives Antonio Bolong (Liberal Party, Bataan), Jesus Crispin Remulla (Partido Magdalo, Cavite), Reynaldo Vicencio (Lakas, Kampi), Laurence Talino (LP, Antipolo, Cabinet) Ma. "Bebot" Aquino (Lakas, Navotas)ang Pilipino, Rhoda L. Sandoval (PDP-Laban, Rhoda L. Gordon Bunyan, LP, Laguna), Constantino Jaraula Lakas, Cagayan de Oro) and Emilio Macias (Nacionalista Party/Coalition, Negros Oriental).

Except for Macias, who is not a member of the House committee on justice, the nine lawmakers had voted against, or abstained from voting on, the majority decision pushing all three impeachment complaints on Wednesday.

But Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Rodolfo Agbayani, a member of the LDP faction led by Sen. Edgardo Angara, said he had withdrawn his signature from the amended complaint because the justice committee had not given "due course" to the original

A2
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

Goodbye 'jueteng', hello STL

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE "SMALL Town Lottery" or STL has distinct similarities to "jueteng," but it is probably the "best legal substitute" for the illegal numbers game, the government's anti-jueteng czar has told the INQUIRER.

The revival of STL, a "bright idea of the [Gloria] Arroyo administration to stop and for all eradicate jueteng," is one of three major recommendations Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn will make to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Hagedorn said he would definitely push for the operation of the "mini (STL) minus the game[s] imperfections." He will also ask the President to "allow local governments units to operate STL, under control and supervision of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, to ensure the government's share of revenues would be pinned back for social services."

"With all the known learned deficiencies/errors me, there's a need to perfect the game this time," Hagedorn said.

Launched in 1987 by the PCSO, STL was used as a front by jueteng operators and corrupt government and law enforcement officials.

"The purpose was to integrate with jueteng operations, offering better incentives to runners and collectors and, at the same time, allocating certain percentages to local government units, the Philippine National Police and other beneficiaries of jueteng payola," Hagedorn said.

STL, which ran until September 1998, was "almost 100 percent pareng-se legalized lotto."

According to Hagedorn, STL failed for the following reasons:

■ It did not get the support of local officials, the police and military "simply because they did not benefit from it as they did from jueteng."

■ Jueteng operators, their financiers and workers were never apprehended. Left without funds, bookmakers they were not employed in STL, they turned to illegal activities, including "guerilla" jueteng.

■ STL only succeeded in making itself a front for jueteng operators. The failure, as stated, was due to the harassment of the anti-Illegal Gambling Law.

A House inquiry in the early '90s showed that due to last STL moneymaking, jueteng flourished because franchises for the legal game had been awarded to the same people behind jueteng.

But Hagedorn strongly believes that "if restored now, STL may offer the best legal substitute for jueteng, which unfortunately and shameful as it sounds, is deeply embedded in the national fabric."

Hagedorn said he would also propose the creation of a Cabinet cluster to "monitor the introduction of STL, the ongoing jueteng crackdown there and the regulation of all illegal gambling activities in the country."

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Carrier

Former public school teacher is DepEd OIC

By Nicole Paye

A FORMER public school teacher who rose through the ranks at the Department of Education is now officer-in-charge.

President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Deputed Undersecretary for Programs and Projects Dr. Fe A. Hidalgo on Aug. 30.

Yesterday, DepEd officials and personnel welcomed her appointment as the new education secretary-in-holdover-ing.

In a press conference at the DepEd central office in Pasig City, Undersecretary for Operations and co-worker Officer in Charge Ramon Bacani said officials and personnel of the department had thrown their support behind Hidalgo.

Bacani said Hidalgo's appointment as education secretary would ensure continuation of the reforms in the education sector and would "depoliticize" the DepEd.

"Education systems are more successful if they are nonpartisan. We don't want the issue of the DepEd secretary to be a political issue. We call on President Arroyo to heed our call to depoliticize the DepEd, consider the continuation of Dr. Fe Hidalgo, and appoint a professional secretary," Bacani said.

He said Hidalgo, who taught in classrooms in her current Tanauan province and in Quezon City before joining the education department, could inspire and relate to teachers all over the country.

The department has been leaderless since Secretary Florentino Abad resigned on July 6 along with nine other government officials following Pangalinan Rogelio Singson's admission that he had talked to a man believed to be former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano during the canvassing of votes for the May 2004 elections. The controversy became known as the "Hello Garci" wiretap scandal.

In the interim, the President appointed Undersecretary Bacani as officer in charge.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced Hidalgo's appointment to a briefing at Malacañang yesterday. But Bunye did not explain why Bacani was replaced until another DIC and not a permanent secretary.

Bacani is related to Rep. Rodolfo Bacani (LP-4th dist., Manila), who revealed the administration's plan to kill the impeachment complaint against the President in the House, which resulted from the "Hello Garci" controversy, before she left for the US on Sept. 15. He is also related to Archbishop Teodoro Bacani, one of the Church leaders critical of the set-up. With GC Gabucayan, Jr.

Miriam defends sister at CHEd

ADMINISTRATION Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago yesterday scoffed at insinuations that her sister's appointment to the Commission on Higher Education was a trade-off for her vote against the impeachment complaint lodged against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Santiago brushed aside rumors that the President's designation of her sister Cha Thong-lyn Defensor as CHEd Commissioner in last July was tied to the impeachment complaint pending before the House of Representatives.

"It has nothing to do with the impeachment. My sister was appointed Commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education before the impeachment proceedings started," she said, reacting to rumors that greased her sister's appointment.

Dr. Defensor, 55, a former lecturer at the UP College of Education and former member of the senator's legislative staff, was named to the CHEd on July 21. She replaced Dr. Cristina Hidalgo who ended her term July 22.

Santiago said critics should focus on her sister's qualifications.

"I think the questions should be directed to the qualifications of the appointee. I think that you'd like to see a professional. But she should be dragged into the impeachment process simply because she's related to me," she said.

Dr. Defensor, who graduated cum laude from Miriam's alma mater University with a degree in education, has three master's degrees, including one in national security administration, and a doctorate in Philosophy in Education Administration.

TJ Burgonio

Palace sees no urgency to bring Mike A, Mikey back from exile

WITH the administration winning the first round of the impeachment case, Malacañang does not see the need to ask the return of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and his son, Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, from their self-imposed exile in the United States.

Neither is it keen on the formation of a Truth Commission as proposed by the Catholic Church nearly two months ago.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and her family had decided it was best that her husband and eldest son, who have been accused of receiving jueteng bribes, leave the country to calm the heat on the President.

"This is the decision of the family and I think they (the two Arroyos) really need to give the President additional time to handle other important matters, not only the political issue, but also the oil crisis, terrorism and the fiscal deficit," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunyi in a briefing.

After initially pushing all out for the creation of a Truth Commission alongside the impeachment process in Congress, Malacañang is now going slow on fulfilling one of the recommendations made by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines in a pastoral letter last July 10 that was crucial in silencing the mounting calls for the President's resignation.

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SEC commissioner asks Palace to reconsider suspension

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SECURITIES and Exchange commissioner Jesus Martinez has filed a motion for reconsideration with Malacañang, asking the Legal Affairs Office to set aside a resolution suspending him for one year for allegedly failing to pay debts owed before his appointment.

In his motion, Martinez said the resolution, which reportedly came from the Palace, "had not been served to him," first by unexplained reasons enumerated at the Immigration and Exchange Commission and the media, by "undisclosed persons" which he said had caused him "irremediable harm and embarrassment."

He asked the Legal Affairs Office to set aside the Aug. 17 resolution, detailing his suspension and to dismiss the charges against him by a Dutch national with which he had business dealings before he joined the SEC.

Martinez said it was necessary on just the motion for reconsideration as issued to avoid any impairment of his functions as a commissioner of the SEC and to dispel any "wrong public impression."

"I am already getting asked. The public impression is that I have been muted out this penalty. Reality demands that I address this," he said.

Martinez said he was sure that the negative campaign against him was because of his desire to win the just-faced industry and his opting for cursible deliberation before taking over the operations of certain pre-need firms.

He said he also believed that the complainant, Cornelio Lubiera, was being used by "parties who are evading their responsibilities."

"This case has nothing to do with my being in public service," he said.

On the Aug. 17 order, Martinez was found guilty of dishonest conduct prior to entering the government and ordered immediately suspended for one year.

Martinez, who was appointed to a seven-year term to the SEC on March 14, 2002, said he has not been served the order.

He said a copy of the assailed resolution was left on his desk and another SEC official also showed him a copy.

Plan holders group presses fight vs PPI

By Alcuin Papa

EIGHT plan holders of the Pacific Plans Inc have brought charges of unsound banking practices against the beleaguered pre-need company's trustee bank, in the strongest salvo yet at PPI and its owners, the Barbangay family.

In charges brought against officers of the trust department of the Barbangay-owned Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) before the Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Pervent Enabling Parents Coalition (PEP Coalition) alleged that RCBC had conspired with the PPI to invest the pre-need company's trust fund in various businesses of the Barbangay family.

These investments, the PEP said, led to the dissipation of the trust fund to the detriment of the plan holders.

As trustee bank, RCBC was entrusted with the trust fund of PPI's traditional education plans and was supposed to independently invest the fund in the interest of the plan holders.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, RCBC said that all transactions involving the PPI trust fund were within the regulations established by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the BSP.

PPI president Alfredo See and the allegations of fraud and supposed mismanagement of funds have been brought before the Makati City court hearing PPI's petition for rehabilitation which he said was "the proper forum."

Injured RP eagle rescued

By Dharylle S. Rivera

A PHILIPPINE eagle, one of only around 600 left in the country, has been rescued by a farmer in Isabela and is to be turned over to the government today.

The eagle, which was slightly injured, is to be flown by plane to Metro Manila and turned over to the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) in Quezon City.

Environment Undersecretary Armando de Castro said the farmer, Benjamin Tuanes, found the eagle feeding on a baby dusted wild boar that had been caught in a chicken trap at his farm in Barangay Gamu-Ilan, San Pablo, Isabela.

Tuanes kept the eagle for a week before deciding to turn it over to Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano III, who informed the PAWB about it.

"We have to assess the condition of the eagle to see if it's fit for release back to the wild or if it needs to be rehabilitated first," said De Castro, who is spearheading the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' wildlife preservation campaign.

He said the eagle had sustained slight injuries in the feet because it was also caught in the chicken trap, but the wounds were not serious.

The PAWB office in Cagayan Valley has been giving the "endangered" the license stipulation.

"A Philippine eagle is sensitive ... Maybe it wondered during the time it was kept in the farm," PAWB executive director Rhandea Lim said.

The eagle was described as "matured," which means it is at least two years old.

The Philippine eagle has been declared an endangered bird species.

All white sand, no soil for Boracay dump

THE PROBLEM with paradise is that it's all white sand.

Its world-renowned Boracay island, environmental and local government officials are at their wits' end trying to find soil more to convert the illegal open dumpsite on the island to a controlled dump.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has said it could not close down the open dumpsite, which has been banned by law since last year, because there was no disposal site for the island resort.

Lawyer Zoilo Andin, DENR special assistant officer for Boracay, said the DENR and local governments have spent the past three months looking for top soil that could serve as cover for the open dumpsite.

"There's really no source of top soil. Where do you get the soil in Boracay? You can't use white sand," Andin said in an interview.

He said the DENR has identified at least four properties that passed the government's standards as top soil sources, but the lot owners have refused to let the local government extract soil from their properties, even for a fee.

Blanche S. Rivera

METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

Court stops opening of BF Homes gates

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE UNITED BF Homeowners Association Inc. (UBFHAI) could regain control over the main gates of their subdivision.

The Muntinlupa City Regional Trial Court Branch 256 has reinstated an injunction on the implementation of a city ordinance ordering the subdivision's main gates opened.

Judge Alberto Lerma ordered on Wednesday affirmative Presiding Judge Marcelo Bonifacio, the city council and barangay officials "to immediately cease and desist from directly or indirectly operating, ordering and ill-treating [Armstrong] or other male or secondary roads in the [subdivision] to the public."

He also prohibited the local government from interfering in any way with the authority of UBFHAI to manage the traffic flow in the subdivision until the court has issued a final decision.

In 1997, Bonifacio passed City Ordinance No. 97-06 reclassifying as commercial zones 80 thousand square and El Grande Avenue.

City Ordinance No. 00-15, passed in 2000, provided for the opening to the public of roads in subdivisions inherited under city thoroughfares.

Lerma said the Writ of Preliminary Mandatory Injunction issued in 2000 had not been cancelled by the court. The reservation also "in the process of considering" UBFHAI's motion for reconsideration.

The association filed an Urgent Ex-Parte Manifestation and a Motion to Implead against the local government after it "forcibly" opened the BF Homes' gates on Aug. 26.

The court directed the local government to file its comment on the motion within 10 days from receipt of the order. The association was also told to reply in 10 days for the resolution.

"Whether the mayor likes it or not, he should back out from interfering in our business," said UBFHAI president Celso Reyes over the phone yesterday.

But, as of press time, the 18 councils, against and Filoteo gates remained open to the public.

In an interview last with the forces on yesterday, Bonifacio said they had yet to receive the court order.

"The order has to be served still, only to my office," said Bonifacio.

Reyes told the business that as the city was delivered to Bonifacio's office around 2 p.m. yesterday.

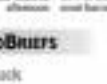
He added that the order to cease and desist from opening the gates was already court and in effect.

"The effect was that the opening gates was already court and in effect. The order must be served on the city's office," said Bonifacio.

Bonifacio was meeting with his legal advisers to study the court order.

MetroBriefs

Pressing his luck



No place for illegal parking

Makati clears waterways

GCAP meet at Miriam

Librarians' forum today

ALL-TIME FAVORITE
YOUNG boys intently watch a spider fight, a favorite pastime in a Makati neighborhood. EDU BAYA

Winner scores in round 2 vs city hall

By Tina D. Santos

LOWER BARANGAYS scored against the Manila government when the court allowed their witness to testify and cited light on issues related to the controversial Amnesty Form 194.

Judge Teresa Soriano of Regional Trial Court Branch 27 denied on Wednesday a motion to quash a subpoena filed by city government lawyers, according to Jojo Perez, counsel for posh caretaker's Wawa Foundation. The group had earlier filed a case against the city government to prevent it from building a teachers' building in the park.

The motion prevented opposition city councilor Ernesto Ang from testifying in court last week. Ang had sponsored the resolution allowing the city government to lease the 2.1-hectare park from the Land Bank of the Philippines during the term of Mayor Alfredo Lim. Through a Memorandum of Agreement in 1993, city hall handed over the property to Wawa, after which proposed a 30-year lease development plan for the park.

Perez said first under the law, a subpoena could be quashed only if the summoned witness was irrelevant. "Ang's testimony can't be deemed irrelevant because he was privy to the city government's negotiations of the property," Perez said.

Perez said the court already issued a subpoena for Ang, who would testify in a hearing on Monday.

Earlier, Atienza said he welcomed the Winner's move to summon him in court to settle the issue. "I'm willing to work with the concessionaires," he said.

MRT wants to cut operating time by 1 hour

By Clarissa S. Santos

MANILA Metro trains could be ordered operating up to midnight, the Metro Rail Transit 3 has asked the Department of Transportation and Communications to allow it to cut its run by an hour or up to 15 p.m.

MRT 3 General Manager Roberto Lastimoso had asked the DOTC to let the railway agency end its operations by 11 p.m. so it would have sufficient time to conduct its regular inspection of the wooden, tracks, arrange, and other crucial components.

"Our maintenance work is suffering with the extended operations. We have to prioritize the safety of the trains and the passengers," said Lim.

MRT 3 now runs from 5:30 a.m. to 12 midnight, but the agency running it wants its shorten operations by an hour. Before Aug. 22, the last MRT train left the Taft-ave station at 10:30.

The DOTC decided to extend the railway's operations to late with the Arroyo administration's campaign to save fuel. The midnight run also served night shift employees like those working in call centers.

The said that by 4 a.m., the MRT's "finance train" already runs from one station to another to deliver the ticket and money for change.

"We need more time for operations. Now, we could have about three hours to conduct maintenance services," the spokesperson said.

Shortening operating hours, according to Cruz, should not matters too much to commuters because there were not many passengers on the midnight run.

Metro-wide survey begins for bike routes

By Tara Y. Quintanilla

THE METROCYCLE 2010 Manila Inc. (MMDA) has begun mapping out a bike lane network in the metropolitan area in completing as soon as possible to walk and pedal ways project called Metro Pedalakan.

Guided by a checklist for an ideal bike route, the Traffic Engineering Center (TEC) of the MMDA's Traffic Operations Center has started a metro-wide survey of possible bike routes, TEC chief Ramon Diwa said yesterday.

"Our number one consideration is looking for bike routes is the possibility that it could be interconnected with the planned network of bike lanes," Diwa said the business.

With the permission of local government units, TEC teams have started inspecting more roads in Metro Manila's 17 cities and municipalities to identify streets that would qualify as bike and pedestrian lanes for its projects.

The MMDA plans to create an interconnected 200-kilometer walk and pedal way network in the metro estimated to cost about P982.5 million.

"Ideally, we should find a route that can be dedicated to pedestrians and bikers, and should be safe, Diwa said. "But there are roads which are not available for this purpose, and so we could use the lane closest to the sidewalk."

Among the criteria the TEC used in planning the network are road use, the surroundings, and the condition of the existing pavement.

"We were looking at secondary roads because there is less vehicular volume there. We also check if the road is used by joggers, bicyclists, or private vehicles, whether it goes through a residential area, or if there are businesses that would be affected," Diwa said.

As the project was conceived as a means to encourage city residents and workers to walk or bike to their destinations amid rising transportation costs, the bike routes should lead to markets, schools, malls, and workplaces like factories and offices, said Diwa.

4 kidnap victims rescued in QC

By Luige A. del Puerto

POLICE rescued four kidnap victims, three of them children, from a safehouse in Quezon City Wednesday night.

In Pelaflorida, Baytan S. police arrested three persons allegedly guarding the victims. Three other suspects, including a policeman assigned with the Aviation Security Command, were arrested that same night in Lower Bicutan, Taguig City.

"I hope this reassures the public, particularly the Chinese-Filipino community, that we are serious and we work hard to neutralize [the Ordonez kidnap group]," said Deputy Director General Oscar Calderon, chief of the Presidential Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (PACER), the police's elite anti-kidnapping unit.

Though the kidnappers demanded P50 million, no ransom was paid, according to an initial police report by Senior Supt. Jose Calimlim Arnizon against Cedric ICHAO (report of the arrest of kidnapping).

Ang Sec. CIAAC brief, blamed the resurgence of kidnapping partly on the worsening political situation. Policemen, she said, were distracted. She also cited the lack of funds for the police's anti-kidnapping unit.

After declaring in her state of the nation address that kidnapping cases were a "thing of the past," President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a more aggressive anti-KFR campaign.

The rescued victims—twins aged 11, their sister, 9, and 40-year-old security guard were rescued with their family the same night.

The children were kidnapped in the early morning of Aug. 30 on their way to school from a middle-class village in Quezon City, police said. The kidnappers commandeered their car, a Honda Civic, to escape.

Calimlim identified three arrested in the safehouse as Crispin Acosta, 28, Rodolfo Olidan, 31, and Benjamin (Rolan, 30). They were described as "watchers" in a police report. Arrested in Taguig were PO1 Antonio Castillo, 32; Gad. Alfredo Manuel, 50; and Lyndo Parado, 30.

Following a report from a caller about "suspicious looking persons" in their neighborhood, police put the place under surveillance.

At the Pelaflorida safehouse, police recovered P60 uniform set, a P60 pistol belt, and firearms.

Arrested in Lower Bicutan were a shotgun, Hosam Uwas without a place number, a shotgun, a 9mm gun, and Castillo's PNP ID.

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Prizes at stake:

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

September brings terror jitters to Indonesia

By Ingrid Tauhen
Publisher

JAKARTA—Indonesia is increasing its level of readiness and alertness against terrorism as the "special period" of September-October approaches.

September and October are especially sensitive months for Indonesia because it was in October 2002 that two nightclubs on the resort island of Bali were bombed by terrorists and it was in September 2004 that a car bomb attack occurred just outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. Sept. 11, 2005 is the fourth anniversary of the plane attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, addressing the Asian-European Defense Forum on Monday, said: "We have to increase our readiness... We have to take measures to prevent terrorist acts."

He ordered his security officers to increase the level of alertness against possible terrorist attacks, noting that terrorist networks still active and might be planning another attack.

"We are still actively looking for Azahari and Noordin Mohammed Top," Yudhoyono said.

Yudhoyono said that fighting terrorism would continue to be the top priority of his domestic.

"We will continue to pursue these terrorist groups wherever they may be hiding," he said. "We will continue our international cooperation involving the police, intelligence and immigration."

He cited the close cooperation between the Philippines and Indonesia in combating terrorism and transnational crimes, and said they were improving intelligence and surveillance by air and other means.

Indonesia has suffered a series of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Asia in the last three years, fatal from the Bali bombing in 2002 and the car bomb attack outside the Australian Embassy in September last year, the other deadly attack was that on the Marriott Hotel in August 2003.

On Tuesday Hilary Jones, Southeast Asia project director of the International Crisis Group, said that the Philippines and Thailand are "the black holes" in terrorism in Southeast Asia.

"In the Philippines, some of the most experienced Indonesian bomb makers have moved away from the MILF and joined forces with the Abu Sayyaf Group and a group of Christian converts to Islam to coordinate southward and engaged in more proficient and well-coordinated attacks, of which the Valentine's Day bombing was one example," she said.

Jones said the skilled terrorist bombers were all trying to get to Mindanao, "which is bad news for the Philippines, but they're having increasing difficulty getting there."

She said that while there was no hard evidence of Jemaah Islamiyah involvement in Thailand's insurgency—which broke out in the more Malay-Muslim provinces in 2004 due to regional jihad—Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's policies might yet send it to that direction.

Jones said that in Indonesia there are some positive developments, "but the threat is the bottom line."

Seiraah Masiyah as an institution may no longer constitute the largest threat," she said. "It's alive, intact, consolidating, actively recruiting, but most of its leaders are not interested in bombing Western targets."

Other highlights of Jones' briefing:

• There are some indications that the renegade JI members who are committed to bombing Western targets, Azahir Moh Top and Azhari, may have formed a kind of suicide brigade, but information is very sketchy.

• Singapore and Malaysia were out ahead in the fight against terrorism early on but Indonesia has made major accomplishments since Bali. More than 300 people are behind bars. The police have gone relatively soft after 9 and 11 and Jemaah Islamiyah are getting stiff sentences. Two of the men involved in the Australian Embassy bombing were recently sentenced to life imprisonment.

• On the ideological front in Indonesia, there is a push to counter the line that terrorism is a result of exhortations from moderate Muslims to strengthening moderate Muslim organizations or from banning the kind of pluralism Muslim thinker Nurcholish Madjid experienced. It's coming from splits within the salafi jihadi ranks resulting from self-styled "moderates."

Mukhlas and the 31 have been seriously damaged. She said that if one's he called an al-Qaida affiliate now became most of the men committed to the al-Qaida line of global jihad against the United States seem to have been marginalized within the organization.

Don't let impeach row cloud terror threat – Gonzales

THE PHILIPPINES' top national security official yesterday urged the public not to be distracted by the current political turmoil as he stressed warnings of possible terrorist attacks in the capital.

"I am repeating them because I am afraid that the political environment could be clouding the situation," National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said, referring to efforts to impeach the President. "I do not want the public's attention to be distracted. They have to know that this threat is real."

He said attacks could occur at any time, based on roughly six-month "cycles" of terror activities in the Philippines.

In July, two separate bombings in southern Zamboanga City wounded 20 people. An incendiary bomb exploded on a ferry on Sunday on the Isabela-Lamitan-Zamboanga, wounding more than 30 and killing a boy.

In February, nearly simultaneous explosions in the financial district of Makati City and two southern cities killed four people and wounded dozens. In February 2004, a bomb triggered fire on a ferry in Manila Bay killed 116 people.

The police blamed the attacks on the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group.

He added that "two to four" suicide bombers from the Indonesia-based terror group Jemaah Islamiyah may have already entered the capital. (Jemaah and Indonesian security authorities believed the Philippines' first 11 suicide bombers have slipped into the country.

Gonzalez said authorities have uncovered a terrorist plan to make and detonate a 1,000-kg (2,200-pound) bomb, but security forces earlier this year seized 600 kg (1,320 pound) of explosives.

He said the Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah, which has trained local terrorists, could still have the "balance" of 400 kg (880 pounds) or are procuring more explosives to continue building the giant bomb.

"We cannot disregard (the existence of the explosives) because the arrests we are getting through communications is that money is coming in on a regular basis," Gonzalez said. "They are aware that they lost 600, but they are saying that materials could be available."

He said he did not want to cause panic. AP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, September 3, 2004
22nd Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Col 1:15-20
Gospel: Luke 5:33-39

The Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus, "The disciples of John fast often and say long prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees. Why do they your disciples eat and drink?" Then Jesus said to them, "You can't make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them. But later the bridegroom will be taken from them and the guests will fast."

Jesus also told them this parable: "No one tears a piece from a new coat to put it on an old one; otherwise the new will be torn and the piece taken from the new will not match the old. No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed as well. But new wine must be put into fresh skins. We no one who has tasted old wine wants to get new wine, because they say, 'The old is good.'"

Commentary

Jesus is put on the spot: why don't your disciples fast like other teachers? And Jesus always thereby presents the world as something from which you can and do, coming of it that are who would bring healing to the pain and illness in the nations. But he is also realistic and tells them the day will come when they will feel how his presence because of the evil people do. And in two short parables—the new cloth and patches, and the new wine in old skins he tries to impress on them the newness and radical difference his presence brings with itself; it is everything creation and redemption of life. As many will realize the all and greatest day since the beginning that God is doing in the world. Anyone who—we find much fault coming as Do we dare to and make sure that others have the full presence in our midst?

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Extra working day paying off for Customs

By Leila B. Salaverria

WORKING extra days is paying off for the Bureau of Customs.

Customs Commissioner Alexander Arevalo said in a statement the bureau was able to collect P730 million in taxes last Saturday and Monday, when it remained open while all other government offices were closed.

He said the collections for the two days worked to reduce the P6.67-billion deficit in customs collections for the first seven months of the year.

On Saturday, the BOC collected P130 million. It was the first Saturday the bureau was open for operations—from 7 a.m to 7 p.m. following its weekday schedule. The BOC will be open Saturdays from now on.

Arevalo had earlier directed that customs offices be open an extra day in the week in order to drum up more revenue.

The commissioner said the P130 million collected was small compared to the bureau's usual weekday earnings that range from P500 million to P700 million, but that he expected the amount to rise in the coming Saturdays.

Increase in collections

"Because Saturday was the first extra day rendered by the bureau, collections on the following Saturdays will increase by as much as P300 million," he said in a statement.

On Monday, the BOC collected P600 million. The government declared the day a holiday for all schools and government offices save for the customs bureau in observance of National Heroes Day which is celebrated on the last Sunday of August.

The BOC is targeting collections of P151 billion for the year. Its earnings account for around 20 percent of the government's revenues.

Former Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina, whom Arevalo replaced, praised his successor's decision to open the bureau on Saturdays.

In an interview, he advised BOC officials to consider keeping the bureau open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"We have to be globally competitive. With regard to export and import operations, the bureau should be open 24/7. The world we are dealing with never sleeps," he told the INQUIRER on Monday.

Lina said keeping the BOC open 24/7 would also lower the cost of doing business because exporters and importers would not have to pay additional fees that result from delays in the processing of their transactions with the bureau.

Lina resigned on July 8 along with nine other administration officials amid accusations of electoral fraud hurled against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The officials, tagged as the Hyatt 10 after the hotel where they announced their resignation, also called on the President to step down.

All is not lost for GMA foes, say legal experts

By TJ Burgonio, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Norman Bordadora

LEGAL sights agree that all is not lost for the pro-impeachment lawmakers amid the House decision on a report by justice committee solicitor Ed Villar Monday killing the move to amend President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago dismissed the opposition claim that it had little time to come up with the 79 signatures required to garner impeachment into impeach the woman.

"The only leverage that is viable for the opposition at this time is to reject the debate on the floor, and then engage in filibuster," said the staunch Arroyo defender.

A lawmaker can talk endlessly during the filibuster in spite of a "chance rule," which in addition followed, lawmaker said.

Sen. Juliet Arroyo's advice to the opposition: "They can simply regroup, be less indolent, work hard to get that magic 79 votes. That done, there is nothing the majority can do. The President will have to go to exile in the Iloilo. Whatever the 79 have a notion that the opposition can do, the numbers are larger names, but numbers do."

The administration stalwart said Tuesday's sessions by the opposition during the committee hearing and the panel's vote to throw out all impeachment complaints-Villar "is much weakened opposition and is limping President."

"You walk out if you will achieve a purpose," said Arroyo.

Impeachment: Still a number of what ifs

From page A1

entire House to report together with the corresponding resolution for or against impeachment.

Interestingly, the committee will have to submit with its report the three resolutions it arrived at on Wednesday: The resolutions (1) junking the Lopez complaint and the amended complaint, (2) declaring the Lozano complaint sufficient in form, and (3) declaring the Lozano complaint insufficient in substance.

By a vote of one-third of all the members, that is, 79 votes, the plenary can either uphold or reject each of these committee resolutions. The vote will have to be a roll call vote. "How what?

Possible SC case

If the plenary upholds the decision of the committee rejecting the Lopez complaint and the amended complaint, I can see the possibility of bringing the matter to the Supreme Court.

The issue would be whether those two complaints are indeed barred by the one-year ban found in Section 5(5) which says "No impeachment proceedings shall be initiated against the same official more than once within a period of one year."

In 2000 the Supreme Court in the Estrada impeachment case allowed backdoor ways to double the meaning and scope of this prohibition.

In so ruling, it ventured the opinion that the facts in the current controversy do not match the facts in the 2003 decision. If the court so desires, it can take a complaint on the merits, the court can might delay the impeachment process.

If, however, the plenary rejects the committee's rejection of the amended complaint, a decision will have to be made on whether the amended complaint is sufficient in form and substance.

I believe that this would not be a difficult matter to decide. Sufficiency of substance simply means that there is a verified complaint, a resolution of endorsement signed by at least one-third of all the members of the House, the same shall constitute the articles of impeachment, and trial by the Senate shall forthwith proceed."

When the complaint was originally filed, it was not filed by one-third of the members of the House. The one-third target was reached only sometime later. But once reached, then House Speaker Jose de Venecia can proceed to send it to the Senate. By one of the newly challenged Villar's ordinance, the trial proceeded.

Another complication

If someone had gone to court to challenge the act of Villar, would the court have entertained the challenge? Lawyers are still debating about that today.

Hence, if the 79 target is reached soon, we will have another complication if there is no agreement as to whether the signatures of 79 will authorize Speaker Jose de Venecia to do a Villar.

Speaker De Venecia has been quoted as saying that he will do a Villar if the 79 target is reached. Will he really?

Minimum expectation

If, however, the 79 target up-front, the sufficiency of substance of the amended complaint is reached only in plenary, or if the plenary reverses the committee decision saying that the Lozano complaint is not sufficient in substance, the Biazon impeachment now require that the complainants be remitted to the committee for formal investigation. This means motion will be open to the public until it is filed. But both sides will have the opportunity to present their evidence for or against. Thereafter the committee will once again make a report and recommendation.

If the recommendation is for the filing of the amended and this is upheld by a vote of one-third of the House, then the committee will prepare the articles of impeachment and the House will appoint the prosecution team. But if the one-third vote is not reached, then it ends the impeachment complaint.

What is the minimum expectation of those who support impeachment? Their minimum expectation is that the proceeding will at least reach the investigation stage where evidence can be formally aired in public.

Battle rages for 79 signatures for final stand

From page A1

Aglunsod said he had submitted a manifestation to the House secretary general because he was scheduled to go abroad on August 30 on a trip that was organized by the special committee on reinvestigation into the impeachment complaint against him.

Only 48

With Aglunsod's withdrawal, the pro-impeachment camp was left with only 48 signatures formally submitted to the House secretary general. The plenary is expected to vote on the committee report dismissing the impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo.

Rizal Rep. Jesulito Manalo and Agusan del Sur Rep. Rodolfo Plaza, both Arroyo allies, said they had withdrawn their signatures in favor of the impeachment complaint against Marcelo.

Both Manalo and Plaza said they had been misled to believe that the complaint was supported by Arroyo.

Manalo said he had been misled by Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, who is a member of the LDP that is backing Arroyo.

Plaza said he had been misled by Rep. Joseph Estrada, who is also

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SPORTS

PBF won't throw in towel, to appeal Fiba decision

By Nassrey B. Cacilla

A RIGHT idea that will allow everyone to save face.

Philippine Basketball Federation secretary-general Sonny Barrios believes that this will happen, and the age competition in the coming 23rd Southeast Asian Games will still be held despite the failure of the Philippine Olympic Committee to settle differences for the PBF with the international basketball federation (Fiba).

"I was the patron saver of the Fiba guys," Barrios says, also the spokesman for POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, told the business yesterday.

"I am very sure that somebody will come up with a bright idea for a win-win solution and everybody wins here."

Barrios said the PBF will appeal the Fiba decision, signed by secretary-general Patrick Baumann. The memo reaffirmed the world body's suspension of its basketball federation of the Philippines.

"As to all cases, we will appeal," Barrios added. "We will exhaust all efforts. I think only an explanation is needed. (PBF president Jun) Controy (to Fiba) why he is appealing personally to Baumann and we didn't.

"If you read it carefully, Baumann's statement was the exact things that the PBF has been asking."

The Fiba denied the PBF's request for reconsideration in a letter sent to the PBF on Tuesday. A copy was also furnished the SBP and the POC.

Barrios remained optimistic that things can still be ironed out.

"Reading between the lines (of the Fiba letter), (in Fiba's) image is the problem of the POC. Otherwise, the suspension on the Philippines would have been lifted already."

He said the Fiba decision basically required the POC to re-admit the SBP and the all stakeholders to reach harmony, something which he said will be very hard to do considering the events that happened since the SBP-organized-but-illegal POC.

"I too will not ask the PBF (not) to hold a fair body duly recognized by the POC," Barrios said. "This would have been avoided if the SBP had stuck to the basic agreement of the April 1999 meeting."

Cojuangco had said he would resign as POC president if the SBP is reinstated to the POC, which regained the age body by a vote of 32-2 from fellow National Sports Associations last June 30.

Fil-Ams beef up RP booters

THE PHILIPPINE national football team will be bolstered by two Filipino-Americans in the Southeast Asian Games. Attacking midfielders Angelino Reynaldo and Michelle Matsuyama, both from Illinois, will fly in to the country in early November to join the SEA Games roster as the Philippines looks to land the gold after finishing fifth in 2003. The duo is officially added spots for Philippine football team, helping the country to a diverse finish in the Asian Women's Championship in Vietnam.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quisco

Stampede loss overshadows daily bloodshed of Iraq war

BAGHDAD—Crowds gathered on Thursday for the funerals of some 1,000 Iraqis killed in a stampede during a religious festival, as the nation grieved over a tragedy which has overshadowed the daily bloodshed of war.

Funeral tents were erected in the impoverished Baghdad Shiite suburb of Sadr City as relatives prepared to mourn their dead, before more of the bodies were due to begin their final journeys to Najaf, the most holy Shiite city, for burial.

Three days of official mourning will spotlight a country bound to mass killing on its streets but shocked by the disaster.

At least 965 people were confirmed to have died on Wednesday when thousands of Shiite pilgrims rushed for imagined safety onto a bridge across the Tigris in Baghdad, only to die in the mire below or crushed on the roadway.

The final toll, one senior official said, was likely to be more than 1,000 as bodies were counted scattered across hospitals, makeshift morgues and family homes across the city.

They lay under white sheets, under foil blankets and makeshift shrouds, in corridors and on pavements, as anxious or grieving relatives searched for bewildered sons among the dead.

Through fears of sectarian attacks, real or imagined, may have contributed to the fear that drove the pilgrims to their deaths, the shock was felt across the battered divides.

People screamed for help from Sadr City, the mainly Sunni Arab district across the river from the Kadhimiya shrine that was the focus of Shiite worship on Wednesday.

A barrage of mortar and rocket attacks on the crowd, some 200,000 strong or more, had added to the tension early in the day. It killed seven people and was claimed by a Sunni group avowing Jihad or bi-emergency against the US-backed, Shiite-led government.

Then, whether by malicious design or simple panic, a warning from within the crowd of a suicide bomber among them sparked a rush. For safety that proved illusory. Blood dripped from concrete walls around the bridge. Bodies drifted in the river.

"Hundreds of people started running and some threw themselves off the bridge into the river," a police source said.

"Many elderly died immediately ... but dozens drowned, many bodies are still in the river and boatmen working on lifting them up."

Shiat civilians were women and children who "died by drowning or being trampled," an Interior Ministry official said.

It was by far the biggest loss of life in such a crowd since more than 1,400 pilgrims died in Mecca during the hajj in 1990.

Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari declared three days of mourning.

Grimmest coverage on national television included an appeal for relatives to claim a body held up to the cameras. He was found next to his mother's body.

Interim Minister Hayan Jaboo and two other top Shiite officials blamed Sunni insurgents for the stampede, saying one had spread the rumor there was a suicide bomber in the crowd.

But Defense Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi, a Sunni Arab himself, said the stampede was not related to sectarian tensions gripping the country since the US-led invasion in March 2003.

Some witnesses blamed poor organization for the chaos as well.

Whatever it was that set the rush for safety, the fear that a bomber might be on the loose was swift grounded in the previous attacks on Shiite religious events in the past two years.

Tensions are high among Iraq's Oval religious and ethnic communities ahead of a referendum on a new constitution for the post-Saddam Hussein country.

Television images showed people clambering down from the bridge to escape the surging crowd and piles of slippers left behind by the crush of people. Reuters

(AGAIN) walk over shoes lost during a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad Aug. 31. Many of the dead drowned after falling off a bridge in a surge of panic triggered by rumors there were suicide bombers in the crowd, in what is by far the deadliest single incident since the U.S.-led war on Iraq. AFP

Unleashed text-messaging genie worries Asia

By Mark Bendeich

KUALA LUMPUR—For Asian governments, text messaging is no longer a matter of twiddling their thumbs.

Asia is cracking down on a technology that has become a powerful social tool, used to organize mass protests, vote idols' winners, pay parking tolls, and, it is feared, trigger bombs.

From Southeast Asia, where authorities say they are worried by security and public confusion concerns, to Greater China, where rooms and spare users to be the major worry, text messaging by anonymous mobile-phone users has created a huge, tangled headache.

In the developing countries of Asia, most mobile-phone users are faceless because they use pre-paid phone cards, which can be bought for a few dollars without giving a name and address.

But anxious governments are changing all that.

This month, Malaysia ordered cellphone companies to register all holders of pre-paid services after text-messaging gossip-mongers hit a raw nerve with false tales that the premier's ailing wife had died.

The rumor grew so large, he felt compelled to deny it.

Text-messaging in Asia has become a menace still to be reckoned with, able to incite a shred of misinformation into a national lobbying point worthy of a government denial.

It is also deemed a security risk.

Thailand moved to register users of pre-paid phones in May, describing it as part of efforts to stop terrorists using mobile phones to set off bombs. That ostensibly forces hate between insurgents for a campaign of bombings in the country's mainly Muslim south.

Shanghai, China's richest city with 20 million people, will require registration of pre-paid users from September to tackle text-message fraud, the Shanghai Daily said at the weekend.

Even Singapore is unable to identify pre-paid phone users, fed up with constant texting the scores of anonymity to separate gullible people from their money with scams ranging from simple credit-card tricks to bogus kidnappings.

One Thailand reporter got a call from a "kidnapper" demanding ransom for her husband—who was sitting right next to her.

"This has become an issue over the last year, particularly in the Asia-Pacific," said Nick Ingelbrecht, principal analyst on mobile communication for US-based research firm Gartner Group.

"There is a lot happening and the reasons are quite varied—ranging," he said. "In Japan, there's a lot of pressure from within the industry to clamp down on pre-paid because it has a criminal side—it's a way for criminal gangs to communicate."

How countries know the power of text-messaging better than the Philippines, where a lightning campaign rallied hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets in 2001 in a "people power" uprising that ousted President Joseph Estrada.

At least 200 million text or SMS messages are sent every day in the Philippines—that's more than one for every Filipino and nearly the country's population as the world's SMS capital.

Any attempt by Manila to limit or control text messaging draws fierce resistance and there are groups dedicated to protecting text messaging rights. A proposal to impose a tax on messaging sent or received this year also met public opposition.

Filipinos still do not have to give their identities when buying pre-paid phone cards.

"The main attraction of pre-paid in Asia is that there are low income countries and subscribers want to control their spending," said Kieran Levy, a Bangkok-based telecoms analyst for Citigroup. "But being able to buy a pre-paid card without giving up a lot of information about yourself is also an attraction."

Pre-paid cards are running Asia into the fastest-growing telecom market, making up almost 60 percent of users in China and over 95 percent in Indonesia and the Philippines at end-2004, according to Gartner. In the Asia-Pacific, including Japan, about 53 percent of the region's 673 million mobile phone users are on pre-paid cards, and the proportion is growing, Gartner estimates. Reuters

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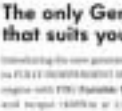

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Indonesia braces for oil crunch

By Jaspart Yambot
Publisher

JAKARTA—Indonesia, following the example of the Philippines, is deregulating its oil industry and withdrawing government oil subsidies.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Monday said that deregulation was one of a five-point package of policies designed to help his country cope with rising oil prices in the world market. The price of crude now ranges between $67 and $70 per barrel.

Addressing the Asian Paragonal Editors' Forum here, Yudhoyono said the other planks of the government's policy package are:

1. The diversification of energy sources and a search for alternative sources.

2. An energy conservation campaign.

3. Increased oil production—from 1.1 million barrels a day to 1.4 mBD in the next four years—and the establishment of more oil refineries.

4. An intensified campaign against the smuggling of gasoline.

Yudhoyono warned that in March he decided to reduce government subsidies on some petroleum products, "a move that sparked some protests but was economically necessary."

If the trend of rising oil prices continues, he said, the government will have to pay 140 trillion rupiah (about $13 trillion) in subsidies, which constitutes more than one-fourth of Indonesia's national budget.

"This is a lot of money—money that can be used to build schools, hospitals, roads and other things that can stimulate growth and productivity," he said.

Yudhoyono said the problem of rising oil prices, government subsidies and the need to meet the energy needs of the poor would continue to be at the top of government's economic agenda.

Archers slip past Warriors in extra time

By Jurnim N. Faya

JOSEPH Yeo used 20 Cents same out big in overtime to lead the La Salle Archers past the Southeast University of the East Warriors, 80-69, yesterday on the UAAP basketball tournament at the Blue Eagle Gym.

Yeo registered with 19 points, while Cents buried back-to-back triples in the extra period to secure the win for the Archers, who extended a four-point basket at the buzzer by Chedy Villanueva to force the extension at 74-all.

"After converting that shot with only one second left [in regulation], I told the boys that it [task it's still going to be to," said Archers coach Rene Pamanero. "I told them that we just have to dig deeper. We're in great shape and we showed that we're really prepared for any possible scenario."

Although fouled at three last for the second semifinal slot, the Warriors remained tied with an 8-4 record behind the idle Ateneo Eagles (9-3).

The Far Eastern U Tamaraws dominated the first Final four ticket with a league standing of 11-1 after.

Earlier, the University of the Philippines Maroons staged a spirited, 16-8 rally in the final six minutes for a 78-63 victory over the Adamson Falcons.

The Maroons (6-6) never even retreated by coach Lito Alegre for keeping their Final four bid alive.

"We expected a physical game, but I told the players not to intimidate," said Alegre. "We needed that win to strengthen."

Marvin Cruz and rookie Axel Dawada led the Maroons with 14 points apiece while Steeve Tuazel added 12 points and 12 rebounds.

The Falcons' bowed out of the semifinal race after dropping to 3-9.

The Archers, who finished their own Final Four drama at 7-4, led at 72-66 before the Warriors mounted an improbable comeback in the last nine seconds of regulation.

Mike Robert Labagala failed to complete a three-point play. Luis Bitagcuan's basket off a steal tied the game, 72-72, with 7.1 ticks left.

A Marvy Arellano lay-up off assist of Yeo, after the Warriors missed an inbounds play, put the Archers ahead, 74-72, with 2.6 seconds.

But the Archers called a timeout to set the final play for Villanueva, who struck unanswered after converting the inbound pass.

LA SALLE'S JB Baptiste (left) contests the loose ball with UE's Angelito Raymundo and Jarod Cardenas.

Abalenos forward Raul Dagsaan was ejected in the last nine minutes for swinging a punch during a loose ball scuffle, while coach Mel Alar was thrown out for pushing a referee with 12 seconds to go.

In junior play the Bengals claimed the first Final four slot after doubling the Abans, 75-42, for a 9-2 record. The Junior Maroons secured the Baby Falcons, 56-37, to keep fourth spot at 8-4.

Formerly senior

Phil Cheer Zhu

UP 78 – Gonzales 14, Cruz 14, Gamot 11, Dela Cruz 10, Ilagan 9, Ramos 7, Ramos 5, Ramos 5, Ramos 2, Ramos 2, Ramos 2

Libyans fete Kadhafi anniversary

TRIPOLI—Hundreds of thousands of Libyans, brandishing banners and showing their support, converged on Tripoli Wednesday to celebrate the 36th anniversary of Col. Moamar Kadhafi's seizure of power.

Martyrs Square in central Tripoli was transformed into a spectacular street party with people poking to rudimentary music that thumped out of speakers, and fireworks, fountains and light displays rounding out the fete.

A bespectacled Kadhafi, dressed in an unstructured dress military shirt and looking relaxed, appeared late in the evening to receive the salutations of the crowds from a balcony and accept gifts from supporters.

He was handed a document entitled "The charter of fidelity" said by the organizers to have been signed "by the Libyan people," in which they "forge allegiance and swear fidelity to their leader."

The unrivaled leader, who at 27 years supplied King Idris in a coup d'etat on Sept. 1, 1969 with other military officers, was expected to address the throngs of people gathered in the Libyan capital on Thursday.

In a sign of Libya's gradual reemergence by the international community, over 120 oil companies—both in Libya after decades of absence—have put up documents to be signed by members Kadhafi and his people. AFP

BESLAN TRAGEDY REMEMBERED
A boy pays respect on the grave of his brother Albert Kaffelagov, who was killed in last year's Beslan hostage crisis, in a cemetery in Beslan Aug. 31. Beslan's bereaved mothers have told Russian President Vladimir Putin his vow to blame for the death of their children and that calls he made to a hastily formed reconciliation commission were a cynical ploy to silence them, the deputy chairman of the commission said on Wednesday. Reuters

Migrating birds may spread avian flu in Europe, UN says

ROME—Migrating birds pose a serious risk of spreading avian flu around the world, including into Western Europe, the United Nations food agency said on Wednesday rebutting fears that European experts moved to quash just week.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) cited a news conference that parts of Eastern Europe, Africa and South Asia were at risk of being infected by the virus in the next term.

"Western Europe could have such a risk next year, I said.

"Now that the winter is coming the risk is expanding rather fast into areas of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa," said Samuel Jutzi, head of animal production and health at the Rome-based FAO.

Bird flu has killed more than 60 people in Southeast Asia and forced the slaughter of millions of fowl since the outbreak began in 2003. The H5N1 strain, which is potentially dangerous to humans, has been found in six Russian regions and Kazakhstan, causing the deaths of nearly 14,000 fowl.

"There's no reason whatever to believe that this geographic expansion will finish in Kazakhstan," Jutzi said. South Asia was also a region at risk, he added.

The specialists Central Asia and eastern Eastern Europe has fueled fears about the mobility of the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of bird flu. The World Health Organization has warned the virus could trigger a deadly global pandemic if it happens to become easily passed from one human to another.

At present humans usually contract the illness from close contact with an infected bird.

"The risk of a human pandemic can be drastically reduced, if not avoided, by action if countries and international organizations are decisive enough in fighting the virus at its source—in the animals," Jutzi said.

Some 50 countries, including France, have so far set up national plans to prevent the spread of the H5N1 strain.

French President Jacques Chirac called on Wednesday for urgent reinforcement action to combat the spread of bird flu and offered technical assistance to other countries in their fight against the deadly virus.

On Tuesday Poland called on the European Union to help ban a stop the spread of the virus.

"Poland wants the EU to talk with Russia about how the whole EU can help Russia—including financial assistance—to prevent the spread of bird flu on its territory," Polish Interior Minister Ryszard Kalisz told a news conference. Reuters

Another Vietnamese dies of bird flu

HANOI—A resident of Vietnam's capital has died of bird flu in the first such fatality for a month, a medical official said Thursday citing test results.

"These tests have shown that the 53-year-old patient from Soc Son district (of Hanoi) was positive to the H5 virus," said Nguyen Tran Hien, director of the Institute of Epidemiology in Hanoi.

If confirmed, medical experts say it will almost certainly be the H5N1 virus, which will have killed 42 people in Vietnam including the latest man.

"The man died on Aug. 24 in a hospital in the capital but we need to conduct more tests to determine the H5 element," Hien said.

Peter Horby, epidemiologist with the World Health Organization in Vietnam, said: "The only H5 we know of that's circulating in Vietnam is H5N1."

Vietnamese authorities had yet to inform the WHO of the latest case, he said.

"If the laboratory results are correct—as of now we have no information—it's almost certainly H5N1," he said.

The last human fatality from bird flu Vietnam was on July 21 in the southern economic capital, Ho Chi Minh City.

Vietnam's vice minister of health, Trinh Quan Huan, said Thursday that the risk of horrific soaring if new people in Vietnam was high and the situation could worsen in the months ahead. AFP

INQ7 BOX

Question of the Week

Choose one: (1) President Arroyo should be impeached; (2) Impeachment process will not succeed, street protests should oust President; or, (3) President Arroyo is doing fine and should complete her term. (Pls. explain vote)

Readers of short (8) texts as published in Tuesday's InqBox and more at "Inquirer Short's"

Text inquirer box
name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to
2167 (Globe) or 181 (Smart)
(Postpaid or 168 customers)

1M join Japan 'big one' drill

TOKYO—Helicopters rushed mock victims to hospitals and firefighters raced up ladders to rescue "survivors" from tall buildings Thursday in disaster drills across Japan to prepare for a killer earthquake.

The massive exercises were the center of Japan's annual marking of the date in 1923 when a massive quake unveiled the Tokyo region, killing more than 140,000 people and setting fires that left much of the capital in smoking ruins.

The exercises came as officials are strengthening preparations in case of a dreaded "big one" hitting Tokyo and its surrounding area—home to about one-fourth of Japan's population. Tokyo has a 70 percent chance of being hit by a major quake over the next 30 years, officials say.

About 1 million people were involved in the drills nationwide, officials said. AP

Philamlife unveils the most flexible life insurance plan in the market

Philamlife, the largest and most diversified life insurance company in the country, recently launched its newest product, QuantumFlex.

QuantumFlex is a whole life plan that earns dividends. By definition, a whole life plan provides the insured with valuable coverage for life. Usually, whole life plans are payable for life, but not QuantumFlex. It has four fixed limited payment options: 5 years to pay, 5 years, 10 years and 15 years. Short 4 paying period options are guaranteed not to change.

Moreover, QuantumFlex insurance coverage DOUBLES on the third year or WAIVER OF PREMIUM. For example, a QuantumFlex plan of P500,000 coverage on the first year doubles to P1000,000 on the third year. Depending on the individual's paying capacity, he is the can choose to pay the QuantumFlex premiums in as short as 5 years or spread out over 15 years.

Thus, QuantumFlex is perfect for those who want the flexibility and freedom to choose their ideal payment option. Persons like high net worth individuals and OFWs can pick the 5-year option for the fastest way to get coverage. OFWs, in particular, might find this option the most attractive, since their contracts are usually good for three years.

Executives and entrepreneurs can choose to go with the more moderate 5-year period, which is neither too short nor too long. Professionals like doctors might want to go with the 14-year payment period, since they can almost guaranteed of a steady stream of earnings in the years to come.

Meanwhile career government employees, teachers and most rank and file employees will find QuantumFlex's 15-year option the most affordable, since their payments will be spread out over a longer period of time. Essentially, no matter what a person's career or profession is, there is a QuantumFlex plan that will appeal to him.

QuantumFlex is available in both peso and dollar denominations and can be tailored to fit a person's different financial requirements. Its dividends and optional benefits can help provide for one's protection, health, education or retirement needs. QuantumFlex can likewise offer comprehensive accident coverage up to age 75, replacement income when one is confined in a hospital, and disability income.

All these features, backed by the financial strength, stability and trustworthiness of Philamlife, help make QuantumFlex the winning choice when it comes to life insurance products. To know more about QuantumFlex or other Philamlife products, see your Philamlife Career Agent now or call Philam Phone at (02) 528-2000.

Philamlife is the celebrated market leader for over 90 years, and it offers the most comprehensive range of life and general insurance products and diversified financial services in the country. It has more than a million individual and group policyholders, and maintains the most extensive network of offices and sales agencies nationwide. Philamlife is a member company of American International Group, Inc. (AIG). AIG is the world's leading international insurance and financial services organization, with operations in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions. AIG member companies serve commercial, institutional and individual customers through the most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks of any insurer.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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What price victory?

THE GREEK general Pyrrhus defeated the Romans at the battle of Asculum, losing many friends, soldiers and equipment in the process. He replied to congratulations with the famous phrase, "Another such victory and we are ruined!" His rejoinder gave the world the idea of a Pyrrhic victory: one secured at such cost as to be inglorious and even tragic.

EDITORIAL

We do not know if it was with such a classical allusion in mind that Makati Rep. Teddyboy Locsin issued this warning to his peers: throwing out the amended impeachment complaints was like "petitioning the tigers in the cage, only to send out a mouse to face the gladiators in the arena. Except now, we are even going to strangle the mouse."

The tiger was the amended Lozano complaint, and the mouse, the original Lozano complaint. The tiger was killed on Tuesday by a vote of 56 in favor of killing the original Lozano complaint, 4 against, and 1 abstention, the administration majority and its allies in the House gauged up to the mouse on Wednesday night and savaged it to death.

Earlier that day, Speaker Jose de Venecia and Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio made themselves visible on the floor of the House. And Claudio's cue was glued to a cell phone much of the time, a reminder of who was really calling the shots in the proceedings.

The gangland-style killing of the original Lozano complaints occurred despite attempts, feeble though they might have been, to try to at least spread the responsibility for the mouse's doom among all the members of the House in plenary. Caguioa de Oro Rep. Constancia Jaworski and Locsin both argued that a better course of action would have been to take from the amended complaints the items that serve to fortify and clarify the allegations made in the original Lozano complaint. Such a course of action would have been more in keeping with the House's self-proclaimed tradition of compromise. Instead, their recommendations were ignored.

Ignored as well were Cavite Rep. Crispin Remulla's at times stumbling warnings that to cast Lozano into limbo would only guarantee a second round of impeachment attempts in a year's time, and the arguments of other representatives questioning the tactic of using jurisdictional questions to close the path for the mouse's resurrection.

The result is that on Monday, all that the members of the House will be asked to do in plenary is to affix their signatures, by way of their votes, to the mouse's death certificate. To paraphrase a headline wit saying, the House has labored, only to bring forth a mouse—and the mouse was squashed on arrival.

It is true that the House has always been known for its subservience to the executive department. But officially ranking as the lower half of an independent branch of government, the House does not need to be seen as be so eager to please the President. For the impeachment headlines are about more than giving the President a gift for her trip to the United Nations; they are about giving the people a chance to see their representatives demonstrating their capability to act responsibly.

Democracy is, indeed, about the rule of the majority, but democratic government is also about preventing overwhelming numbers from exhibiting tyrannical behavior toward not only the minority but also its princes. That is why there are debates, and why contending sides are required to serialize their views. The true nature of the impeachment proceedings is even more can be judged not according to the frustrating, often nonsensical behavior of both sides while they remained engaged in execution. It was demonstrated by the lack of thought and due diligence of the proceedings after the debate was refused to the majority and the very few within its ranks who persisted in displaying independence of thought. In more instances, highly contentious issues were settled: issues that have divided not just the House, but the country.

Such was the furor of the pro-administration majority members that they could not just cut off the Thursday what could be decided late into the night on Wednesday. The last time such indecent haste was on full display was during the canvassing for votes for the presidency. And we know the bitter results of that exercise. It weakened the administration the two sides, it deepened still one political wounds and it added salt to those wounds. The majority may have gained a victory, but at what price?

Let the truth come out

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

LIKE a bad telenovela, it looks like the impeachment case will end up hanging. Alas. While the pro-administration congressmen may successfully kill the impeachment complaint, it would not lead to closure.

Did Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo cheat in the last elections or not? The people want the answer to this question. But the Commission on Elections (Comelec) will insist that it answered. The people will be denied the truth.

While the House of Representatives' power of impeachment and the plenary may be able to evade justice, they are wrong if they think that would end GMA's problem. On the contrary, those problems can only worsen. The issue remains as "president," but the model to be able to govern. There would be no end for her and her apologists. Some would be saying, "Pinoys let the dead that caused the crown," be more true. Illiterates will take to the streets once again. And their number will get progressively bigger. Another people power uprising is likely.

What a life it would be for her. She cannot sleep nights and she cannot go anywhere without being insulted publicly. Cruel jokes about her will become popular: is being a famous fuck president worth all that aggravation?

Yet GMA would have avoided all that had she allowed the impeachment complaint to go up to the Senate for trial. After all, what is there to be afraid of if her claim that she won "fair and square" is true? The trial will show that and she would be acquitted. Then there would really be a closure, and she can rest easy until the end of her term in 2010. No need to give way to Nobel Laureate and Jose de Venecia in 2007 just to die out key in Malacañang two more years. She would be a legitimate president, there would be no doubt about her mandate.

Why did she choose the difficult, nasty road? "Sure can only be one reason. She knows she is guilty and she knows that will uncover that. So she and her paid hacks in and out of Congress are doing everything, spating no expense, to prevent the evidence from coming out.

After all, endorsing the complaint to the Senate doesn't mean GMA is guilty. That would only be the beginning of the trial, during which both sides would be given the opportunity to present their evidence. If GMA's evidence is more convincing than the prosecution's, she will be declared innocent.

The shameful goings-on in the House the last couple of days just that dort of iniquity at its lowest point in Philippine history. Though she is the chief beneficiary of the pompon congressmen are something we can be proud of (and our should convince encouraging them), the voters of the other 14 are those who want to vomit. In 2004, old days. Moses inflicted a plague on all the first-born of the Egyptians. And God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Would that all the old incorrigible types in the House be hit by a similar plague and the House itself crumble down on its members...after all the young congressmen have left.

The murder of the complaints in the House shows every bit of why a parliamentary form of government would be a disaster for us. Parliament, which would be populated by the same congressmen we have now, would be doing the same thing every day. However nature may urge us. The lawmakers are supposed to represent the people, but they are supposed to obey the wishes of their constituents. Eight out of every 10 Filipinos have already signified that they want GMA to resign or to be impeached. Yet the congressmen are disobeying the wishes of the people and protecting her.

The shots at the House has all the makings of a Mr. Thorn production. As part of the deal with Fr. Soriano, the President already has in a Constitutional Commission to change the Constitution—in spite of surveys showing that the people don't want the Constitution changed and don't want a parliamentary system of government.

What is happening now is worse than normal law. It is democratic-flagellant to democracy.

Bar exam reforms: Finding meaning in ritual

Passion for Reason

Raul C. Pangalangan

FOREIGN scholars and diplomats have asked me recently: How come Filipinos love to talk like lawyers? It is bad enough that legalese is a well-hard English, but they wonder why ordinary citizens, steeled in the "sovereign parens patriae of choice," prefer to be shackled in the technicalleanguage of the law even when they ponder fundamental moral or political questions.

There is actually a universal explanation: they "learned to think with lawyering" and it's not limited to law. You sue your doctor, and what used to be a simplepairing in your eye is suddenly a "corneal abrasion"; a frustrated neighbor's pool, suddenly "hazardous", you get an A-OK in your annual medical, and you say the last meeting was "unmarketable."

Even the bar exams have "unmarketable" items. Their jalopy cooks are to the middle of the desert, and forty tries to shoot and says: "I thought you said you could fix this car?" Her replies: "Sure. I'm an expert. If the drawbacks doesn't die down and the differential is deflected, this car will run fine!"

But there is also a uniquely Filipino explanation: the traditional hegemony of lawyers in our public life. Just list the former presidents: Quezon, Osmeña, Laurel, Roxas, Quirino, Garcia, Macapagal, Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Estrada, Macapagal-Arroyo. The nation has never been on a "non-bar subject" because, heaven forbid, it would require an accurate one. For as the late orthodox Jew can by pseudo agreement on hour and when government can stop into our lives, what Holmes called the "incidence of the public hurt."

The high priests of that creed are the lawyers. And we select "the guardians of the faith through the annual ritual known as the bar examinations. On each of the four Sundays in September, we recruit that rite of passage. This Sunday, 5,758 candidates are expected to take the bar examinations at the De La Salle University's Taft campus, and of those only 30 to 50 percent are expected to pass.

The Constitution gives the Supreme Court the sole power to admit lawyers into the profession. Each year, the Court designates one of its justices to chair the bar exam committee, and he then appoints a bar examiner for each of the eight subjects in the exam. The examiners submit their draft questions to him, and bedtime has it that he makes the final call on which questions will be asked. This year, Justice Ruben T. Reyes is chairs the committee of examiners.

The exam is the sole device for quality control for aspiring lawyers. The Court effectively tells the law schools what courses to offer, what laws to teach, what skills to develop among their students.

For example, when the Court's Study Group on Bar Examination Reform proposed to drop Taxation as a bar subject, it was feared that law schools would no longer teach the subject. When I served as a bar examiner in Political Law many years back, I was given strict instructions: do not ask questions requiring memorization. Do not ask for enumerations and definitions. Do not ask "true-or-false" questions. Do not look only at the conclusion but give credit to analysis and reasoning. In shaping the bar exams, the Court also shapes the way the law schools will teach their students.

Yet the Study Group has found that the bar exams have also rewarded legal education. "Unfortunately, the very existence of the examination has stymied to a significant extent legal education. Many if not most law schools have tools of passing the bar examination the principal, or even sole objective of legal education. This has without doubt impoverished legal education. ..."

Instead of training students to practice law and serve clients, schools train them to what interests law schools desire as "bar bar"—"short answer questions" based on a simplistic set of facts rarely out of touch with real life problems that are rarely so neat and tidy.

I have elsewhere discussed the most radical scheme adopted by the Court in July 2004, based on a program drafted by Justice Jovencito Zuñiga, and to be implemented in the coming years. For the first time, the reform focus on the mentology of the exams. Because of the unprecedented increase in bar exams, discretion is granted toward phasing all exam failures and instituting the examinee-based exam processes. The examinee is subjury and ad hoc, his identity shrouded to secrecy until he passes all 5,000 exam booklets over five months. The Mendoza reforms will allow examinees to examine and check his/her own exam's from one another, and will safeguard the integrity of the exams through the integrity of three people and scientific ways of grading.

Still, the Court has no choice but to tighten the exams because of laxity and point inflation in our schools. In particular, the embarrassing outfunction that many law schools have abdicated in exchange for higher enrollment or, chauvinistically flung for the goodwill and misplaced thanks of undeserving students. They merely dole in the Court and its bar examiners the role of being the "bad guy."

Reminds ally, the 30 percent passing rate in the Philippine bar exams is not too low—Korea's is 2 percent and Japan's 3.5 percent. But that's an fundamental differences. Abroad, there are lawrelated jobs for those who don't make it, and there are not stigmatized. In the Philippines, even the 30 percent who pass may not up under employed. Moreover, both Korea and Japan have begun reforming their bar examinations. Japan in particular now aims for a 25 percent passing rate and has created new law schools.

So I told our gladiators at the Taft bar exam collusion, they who aspire to be "wise in their calling," remember the call: "Strength and honor in the signal, solemn hall. What we do in life echoes in eternity."

Comments to pascualpr@gmail.com

An empty victory

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE LAST hope of the opposition to revive the impeachment arrow against President Macapagal-Arroyo, after the three impeachment complaints had been nailed in the House committee on justice, hangs on the double threshold the ability of the opposition to muster the six critical votes to reach the 76 signatures required for the consideration of the amended complaint to the floor, and for an impeachment trial.

Impeachment proponents have until Monday to deliver the 79 diplomas to set the House ploughing through the 56 hours of the amended complaints, which was rejected by the justice committee last Wednesday.

On Monday, the committee will submit a report on the plenary on its decision last Wednesday that the amended complaint filed by lawyer Oliver Lozanilla on June 23 had complied with the legal requirements of impeachment proceedings. This ruling, in effect, endorsed two other complaints—one filed by Rep. Edcel Lagman and the other by Gabriela—which were rejected by the justice committee last Wednesday.

On Monday, the committee will submit a report on the plenary on its decision last Wednesday that the amended complaint filed by lawyer Oliver Lozanilla on June 23 had complied with the legal requirements of impeachment proceedings. This ruling, in effect, endorsed two other complaints—one filed by Rep. Edcel Lagman and the other by Gabriela—which were rejected by the justice committee last Wednesday.

But there are two big ifs. The first is whether the opposition can secure the six additional signatures. The second is that it have three motions to the plenary where the pro-administration committee can not expected to give up the ultimate prize of conviction.

The untangling of the complaints in the administration-dominated House committee has given rise to accusations that the administration has railroaded the impeachment complaints and that by not allowing it to reach the stage of a hearing—the point where the allegations that the President rigged the 2004 elections and committed other serious offenses could be proved or disproved in a proper forum—it has deprived it of its day in court.

The convoluted path of the complaints in the committee is not without political consequences to the President. The gumming of the complaints is an empty victory for the administration. It merely postponements that the administration has the capacity to deploy the advantages of incumbency to save the President from being removed. Until the President leaves the scene on the defined benefit and where it can be shown that the administration has failed and do not measure up to reasonable standards, it would be hard for her to regain public confidence and consolidate the legitimacy of her government.

What is at stake in this impeachment scene is the credibility of the impeachment process as a mode to remove official accused of abuse in office. It would have been ideal if the complaints had been transmitted to the Senate, but part of the failure stems from the incompetence of the opposition.

In begin with, the complaints suffered from duplication of preparation. The five counts complaint was prepared in a hurry and appeared to have been filed to jump the gun on other impeachment plans. An assertion along the other was elaborated and the opposition took a carpet-bombing approach that bombed up a wide range of every conceivable offense against the President. When the President's supporters mocked the weaknesses of the complaints, they did not lose time in encouraging its hasty dismissal, hoping that it would never be heard.

This has given rise to the suspicion that the Lozano-complaint was an embroidered union inspired strategem to push a weak impeachment case. But this suspected approach to be wrong turned, given Lozano's record for being a legal hoppy-in-training impeachment aides. As early as 2008, before the crisis broke out over the revelation of the super-lobbying presidential interference in the election results, Lozano was the drafter of 51 failing an impeachment case against Mr Arroyo.

The second fatal error was that, after the opposition groups realized that they had a weak case in the Lozano complaint, they sought to remedy its weaknesses by filing the Lagman complaint and an amended complaint that sought to make up for the weaknesses of the original Lozano complaint. These two subsequent complaints were intended to remedy the constitutional infirmities of the Lozano complaint, which in principle against the initiation of multiple impeachment proceedings within a year.

The impeachment proponents are now suffering the consequences of their incompetence. This pro-administration bias is a trap of their own making. It would have been better if their preparation had been more competent. Then their chances of moving the complaints past the obstacles in the committee would have been better.

Some observers have declared the impeachment case only hope that the opposition will get the votes to cut down that artificial the amended complaint to a formal trial where the outcome is uncertain and unpredictable.

Don't blame us!

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

bring about any change in our lot because no one in the political level needs or bothers. We are flawed individuals, but collectively, given a common cause and inspiration, Filipinos have managed to pull off grand moments in history.

If failure is now attributed to anybody, then accept the blame as our leaders who have squandered the goodwill and public support they were entrusted with by a gullible public, as well as to the Filipino ethic, who manage to co-opt, corrupt and compromise every struggle we have to oppose to ridiculous governments, invaders, dictators and dictatorial leaders.

If any reason for failure needs to be singled out, then let it be our lack of conscience and vigilance, as well as the abject manipulation of public opinion and political power by open traitors. Blame, no, the "system" that is nothing but a feudal society masked in democratic garb, a representational democracy that disguises the dominance of national policy by elite interests and self-interests by a citizenry void of participation.

BLAME tawsug, invasions, fraud elections and the perennial legalese of powers. But please, don't blame me, or the millions who are like us, who still cling pious, causing nation woes, seeming criminality and a leadership rife not only to fail to inspire but actually makes a virtue of cheating. Don't compound our sense of insecurity and helplessness by failing to see your role in change first before we see any change taking place at the national level.

On hindsight, I also feel the use of those photos of street demonstrations and stories from the first Marcos years was a direct result to the cultural struggle waged by everyone who fought Marcos and valued their lives and safety just to take a stand. There is nothing wrong with making our fears to speak in political governments, even if the results are not what we envisioned. Only the corrupt ways of politics are part at fate. By continuing it without those seemingly futile protests, we would have ended up in even worse straits.

The White Rajahs of Sarawak he acted as benefactors of the Bumiputra, predictably did despicable the commission deliberations and piracy. That's where personal, internal change would be most useful, is also want hard to instill a DNO to Muslim culture, as the Muslim charter the President wants her to send to debate on with self what she can do as her level to raise the economic out of the muck. Listening to her conscience, and realizing what her decisions have done in office is saving the country would make it the signal start.

* * *

ALL "rustic workers" are invited to take part in a Mass and Inter-faith Gathering tonight (Sept. 3) at 7:30 p.m. the Bantayan para sa Kaisipan Liunang Ina Tunti) sa La Salle Green-hills, Mandaluyong City. Among those expected are former President Cory Aquino, Susan Roces, Sen. Edcel Villanueva, several bishops and personalities.

Rep. Edmund Reyes' call at the Bataan Undersecretary for Social Welfare and Development "Pantawid Pamilya" program is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. Reyes should also ensure that the beneficiaries of the program are not only the poorest of the poor, but also those who are willing to work for the benefits they receive.

Boarders, borders

TODAY'S column deals with two border issues that are quite different, though both are important, especially for children.

I'll start out with the boarders. Some of you may have guessed what I'm referring to, but let me explain with a little story about unintended issues, even print, even proper, even boring-print, who were through a complete physical check up some years back as part of the requirements to emigrate to the United States. One oldest son, who was

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

then 10 and a half years old, was found to have a minute speck on his lung. When visiting the U.S. consulate last Wednesday with a solemn photo his and Wife, told he had to undergo "medication."

But vaccine are important, almost as much as public, which is what I'll cover in the "boarder" part of today's column.

Ills and drugs

Vaccines are all around us. Dollar in Tagalog). But the ones that are familiar to most people are those given to your children and most moms sophisticated by saying, "Yay, we get babyshots."

Vaccine are even more amazing than this. They're a huge family with thousands of species and they come in all shapes and sizes. The ones that others humans include measles, tuberculosis, whooping cough, pneumonia, tetanus, etc. The ones you see most often, especially out of the baby's mouth (like spaghetti), are the mumps virus, rubella virus, rotavirus and pneumonia are much smaller, so you can't detect them as easily. The bacteria are and subspecies are quite vicious, their names telling you how they attack themselves to the inside one's cells. Pneumonia are the ones that cause that infected itching on the testicles. Tuberculosis are the one blood, causing one to septicemia.

Like law, Filipino parents tend to take these matters for granted, as almost a normal part of childhood and of life, but joke about their being "boarders," but they're really much more dangerous than that. Vaccine are the ones that cause all kinds of leukemia-like, including thinning, wasting and wasting, as well as anemia. They're not noisy, manipulating rather quietly. I've seen children with small, barely information that the parents read our front covers of lonely openings.

Many of these diseases, in fact, which leads to the blood-red insistence you see often among children from hospital commercials. And because so many of the children in these places are poor, behind, parents see the worms as normal.

Medical heroes

Someone should try to compare how much these worms put the economy in terms of tonnes of rice, kilos of vegetables, fish and meat that the worms consume. Think of the sizes of steamers. There are other hidden costs are often mine. For example, when you visit many public schools, you'll notice the children seem to be so much more behaved than those in the private schools. Look closely and you'll see they're actually suffering from a combination of hunger and intestinal parasites. If they're well behaved, it's because they're too weak to be boisterous. But those quiet kids actually cost the nation, with the worms sapping the kids' energies, productivity and, in the long run, their intellectual capacity.

Most worm infestations can be prevented with hygiene, although, as shown by the pins and pinpet in mollusc one, that is easier said than done. The aggressive cases from eating raw or half-cooked meat, where the tapeworms cysts may be present.

Then infected, you have to wipe it with medicine. We're going to send more active campaigns to convince parents that it's not only cost-effective to treat worm infestations. Just talk about how all the reproductive on the kids' with and how it can reduce because of the hospitals.

Typical cost for a deworming pill is around P5, which, when are richer old things but I haven't been able to find anyone producing generic versions. No wonder so many Filipino parents don't bother to deworm themselves and their kids: the financial products are outrageously expensive.

The Department of Health has dedicated one bedbed annually to deworming, but that's not enough. Other diseases those are. Many syringes is also necessary to be fancy name Sanofi-Aventis. The paper products beautiful flowers which are screwed at night. The small cards look like the ballooning trick, and name a bit like coconut, than in name rising syringes.

* * *

Now to another important issue that health issue, polio. It's encouraging to hear that the DOH is intensifying its polio immunization campaign. Actually, oral polio vaccine (OPV) has been available in government health centers for several years now, but many parents don't avail themselves of these vaccines, which are given free of charge, or refer to other sources.

The current anti-polio campaign comes on the heels of an outbreak in Indonesia. In April, Indonesia reported its first case in 10 years. Since then, there have been more than 200 cases, leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare the country "high risk" for polio. Indonesia has also turned globally, but the outbreak in Indonesia means the disease is still here to stay. Worse, there are fears that the cases in Indonesia could spread to neighboring countries, including the Philippines, and even early spark outbreaks in distant parts of the world.

The WHO and UNICEF have now set two deadlines: world can create public health problems. That's an impossible one, the first polio case in Indonesia may have been brought in by someone returning from the hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Another theory is that it may have been brought in by migrant workers. There's not suspicious that it may have been introduced from Nigeria.

Polio vaccinations in Nigeria have stopped since 2003 because radical Muslim clerics there spread rumors that the vaccines were part of a US plot. There's another aspect of globalization for you. Another theory is that it was brought by tourists. Remember our own problems in 1995 when anti-family planning groups spread word that tetanus vaccines were causing abortions in our women? That year the tetanus vaccination rates dropped, together with childhood immunization because mothers were avoiding both vaccines.

The Indonesians, who have launched a massive immunization campaign, also have to deal with the rumor mills. This time around, the rumor going around is that the vaccines are prepared from monkey kidney cells and are therefore religiously prohibited.

So it's never simple. OPV is administered by mouth so there's less risk of health factors in our injections-phobic country. The problem through is that you need three doses of OPV and many parents forget to get the follow-up doses. So make sure you finish your rounds. We fear AIDS and avian flu but forget that polio—which can be debilitating, if not fatal—is a serious public health concern as well.

The ghosts of history in East Asia

COMMENTARY

Antonio Chow-tuan Chiang

THIS year marks the centenary of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, and last Aug. 15, many countries commemorated the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II in the Pacific.

Of course, Japan's militant dominance in East Asia, which began with the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and led to World War II, is no more. But the ghosts of this history still hangs over in East Asia, with each country struggling to find ways to deal with the past.

Today it is benchmark. Over the centuries, Japan and China have taken turns dominating East Asia, and both now seek to assert regional hegemony. Historically, the Korean Peninsula was the playground for the rivalry, but, with North and South Korea opposing to stake claims to regional influence.

Resentment over past wrongs has come all of these two nations for influence.

During his visit to the United States in June, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun told President Barack Obama that Japan's colonial rule of Korea over 100 years in history. His remarks shocked China, which views itself as the victim of invasion from neighboring by the Japanese and has no power to cite history of bullying by neighbors.

Roh also spoke ominous signs for its continued to not facing up to history, saying that it does not deserve a seat on the UN Security Council. Japan long contested Korea, and during World War II, Koreans were forced to join the Japanese Imperial Army—a situation similar to that of Taiwan. But, whereas the struggle between China and Japan for dominance over Korea was the focal point of the East Asian theater, Taiwan was but a side show, a mere outpost for the Imperial Navy. Currently, while Korea was a major point of friction in China.

After defeating both the Qing Dynasty and Russia, Japan, for only gained control over the Korean Peninsula but also extended its reach deep into Northeast China. Its East Asia's "Big Brother," Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, in Northeast China, in 1932, Japan wanted manchukuo to become what India was to Britain or what Algeria was to France—a crown jewel of the empire—and was a million strong against 100,000 of whom died there after Japan's defeat. Japan's occupation of Taiwan was also for economic purposes to develop heavy industry.

Japan's lasting governance in China under Wang Jingwei was like Germany's Vichy government in France under Henri Philippe Petain. Both men were treated as traitors after the war ended. By contrast, in a result of long contact with Japan, Taiwan and Korea had developed a complex of both resistance and relation toward their rulers. With only a few exceptions, the hard-core was united. Japan into the colonial system.

Japan's colonial rule was also throughout the region following Japan's defeat in World War II. Civil war broke out in China, the Korean Peninsula was divided and the other Southeast Asian colonies, with the sole exception of Thailand, reverted to either France to achieve independence.

China has still failed to live up to the history of manchukuo and its 15th war, not to mention opening the secret files concerning Mao Tsetung's decision to send almost a million soldiers into the Korean War. South Korea initiated talks with the Japanese government under Kim Dae-jung on confronting the colonial of Emperor Hirohito's wartime. Much has 16,000 Taiwanese and about the same number of Koreans soldiers who died for Imperial Japan are worshipped in Japan's Yasukuni shrine. And recently, some civil groups in each country has started to demand the return of the remains of their countries' war soldiers buried in Yasukuni.

Taiwan's attempt to maintaining reflects the ruler relation of its nationalist government on prosecution from the United States and assistance from Japan. Chiang Kai-shek had no choice but to cooperate with the Japanese in maintaining order in Taiwan, as well as to suppress the uprising. Army's re-claim of itself as just Taiwan's officers in confronting the communists. Japan has never apologized for its commission of Taiwan, and the Taiwanese had no opportunity for honest self-reflection on their role in the colonial era.

The spring, anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out almost simultaneously in both China and Korea, with both countries seeking to place the memory of Japanese dominance in the service of building a new national identity and strategic alliances. The only exception that, like the former is able to mark 65 years since the end of fascist rule in Europe, Japan's commemoration of the end of the war in the Pacific will expose lingering—and still raw—historical contentions. Unlike in Europe, however, historical issues in East Asia do not provide the evidence can not be strong ambitions.

One hundred years ago, the rise of Japanese military power changed the face of Asia. Many meetings, the demise of Japanese power changed Asia's face again. Today, as China rises in wealth and power to once again, has both its friends, waiting for the ghosts of history to disappear.

Project Syndicate

Antonio Chow-tuan Chiang was deputy secretary general of Taiwan's National Security Council from 2000 to 2004.

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OFWs in the 'front rooms' also deserve recognition

LETTERS

THERE is nothing to be ashamed about domestic work, and our compatriots in the world's kitchens and nurseries have nothing to apologize for. There is honorable and honest work. He isn't a janitor we gave recognition to compatriots in the front rooms, in the limelight.

I begin in her column, "8 Filipino-Americans in the White House," (PDI, 8/27/05) Rina Jimenez-David doesn't mean to downplay Filipino genes only I know first hand a lot of Filipinos who deserve recognition not just for being excellent domestic helpers, nooks or nannies. There is a famous Filipino orthopedic surgeon here in our area who is well respected by his peers and patients; his name is Edgar Martinez, M.D.

A second cousin retired as a nurse director in a big hospital in Long Island, New York. Her Filipino husband owns a reputable employment agency in New York. They both graduated in the Philippines. A son of theirs is a captain in the US Air Force and he is in the Pentagon handling highly classified governments information. The second son is an accountant; and the youngest is one of the executive vice presidents of Chase Bank. The last named and wife were a composite of Nurse and Writer here.

I believe my own, who are still Philippine citizens (no immigrant here, also deserve some recognition. My eldest son graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting degree; he is now gainfully employed as fiscal accountant in Morgan Stanley. The eldest does for his graduate studies, while he is adding to Rutgers University, will be paid by his office. He finished his elementary and second year high school at St. Johns School in Tuguegarao, Cagayan City.

My second son is in the Dean's List and attend a full scholar it still have to pay $720 out of his $1,000 per semester as tuition fee) at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). He is now in his second year college taking up Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering.

And last but not the least, the last named he finished his elementary in Bulacan Elementary School, his high school in Ateneo High School (both of these schools are public schools) he is a recipient of a nationally awarded golfer (went to Bandung, Manila) and his college in University of the East. He is a computer consultant as designed in big financial institutions.

I just begin that those kinds of accomplishments are recognized in our country to serve as inspiration for our countrymen to accomplish or acquire other honorable jobs besides being domestic helpers, nannies and waiters which are also very honorable occupations.

—DAVID TEH,
davids_t@HOTMAIL.com

The Australian factor in the Allied efforts

THIS is regarding the news item "Australia end of war, has little bonfires in RP" (PDI, 8/15/05)

Typical of news accounts about World War II events in the Philippines, nothing is mentioned about the Australian contribution to the Allied efforts in Philippine territory.

Probably unknown to most Filipinos is that Australian warships and personnel valiantly fought on the Allied side against the Japanese naval forces in the decisive four-day Battle of Leyte in October 1944—a battle that has been acknowledged as the "defining battle of the war in the Pacific." The Allied victory in this epic battle was the turning point of the war.

On Oct. 23, 1944, Tuesday Day the Naval Australian force consisting—which included, among others, Australia, Hampshire, Canberra, Gloucester, HMS Arunta and Warramunga—made its own mark in naval history when its vessels, Australia and Shropshire, were engaged in the iconic duel by Japanese aircraft.

Australia, the dominion flagship, took about being hit mortally by an enemy plane. Then, it was the first Allied ship to be hit by a murderous suicide aircraft.

In the action, 30 officers and men were killed and 64 injured, and 64 officers and men were wounded. Its seriously Captain E.D.S. Dechaineux, who was, mended Australia, was himself mortally wounded. Commodore J.A. Collins, who was the top Australian officer, suffered severe but he survived wounds.

In an equally—unmentioned in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October, we Filipinos have recognized both American and Japanese forces, the main protagonists of this biggest naval battle ever.

Things close at the time and after the action, as least, of fairness and gratitude—are, Filipinos, also give due honor to the three-valiant men in uniform, who risked their lives in the Philippines in defense of freedom and democracy that both the American and Philippine economy in common.

—RAUL S. ISLETA,
governor,Northern Samar

The opposition walkout

DEEDS does senators and congressmen throwing papers inside Congress is only a drama for us Filipinos. Those people who have lofty salaries and have college degrees did not observe proper decorum inside Congress. "Parang hindi sila nakapag-aral (They didn't act like educated people)," said my colleagues, who is only a high school graduate.—Rhea Sumiran, Tuguegarao, RIA

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

* * *

These young congressmen acted worse than the so called gentlemen. They're brainy persons dramas. They're as jokes (clan element). What kind of nation will our children have if these people run our country? Boo Philippines, Boo Congress.

They are the young battleship controversy. They only pursues their personal interests and power. Some of them (cowards and traitors) are the mole of the ruling administration (extremist constituents. Remember that the old Aquinistic entrenched patrons when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was installed as President, leaving his dear friend Joseph Estrada.

What legacy did the late Sen. Benigno Ninoy Aquino leave to his children? While Jim Ong left is so vocal in criticizing the President, senator is Senator Noli? We have proven herself from her. She is protecting her position as a newly elected senator. Satisfying parties or rendering impeachment might impact on her term in the future. Where is she? Why is she so quiet? Ossou speak up, Mo Pia.

Gilbert Remulla joined the pro-impeachment team because he the President seemed to take a neutral position on the Mideo Remulla feud in Cavite.

What principles do they have? Nothing else. Did they ever do something for the poor, for the country?—Gregorio Lopez, Imalle City, CA

* * *

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has won her battle against those who want her to be impeached. The new logical question is, will she win the war? Is she going to last her full term till 2010?

What is apparent to the inner "show" is Gloria's political strength and her opposition weakness. She was able to marshal her forces without doing it on blatantly. There were impressive complexion. There were congressional deliberations and the complaint was found sufficient in form (whatever that means). And there was the inevitable quashing of the complaint for being insufficient in substance. What a show!

For those who care, this was a very badly scripted theater. And for those who don't care, there were those who do, so why care one way? There will definitely be more grievous, a lot of noise, but I'm betting my fortune pins that nothing will happen. There's just not enough support from the masses.

Sure, we many people like Gloria, or common hating Pinocchios like Gloria are just brave who wants to be in everywhere. I mean, there are not enough people willing to put their action where their feel and say. There is not enough reason to go back to the streets.

What can push enough people to really take to the streets? Only what happened to Joseph Estrada in 1986? Maybe when people are real hungry and there is no relief in sight. Maybe when people's sensitivities are really violated. There is nothing out there, at the moment, that can move throngs to demand Gloria's ouster. What a sorry situation we are in!—Jose Marcano, Manchul, Hong Kong

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Across the NATION

E. Visayas Bayan chair gunned down

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan on Thursday took over as chief of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division in Central Luzon.

However, the murder of the Bayan (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan [Bloc]) chair in Eastern Visayas marked his departure from his previous command. On the other hand, statements of protests and demands to make him answer for the alleged human rights violations ignored his arrival in Central Luzon.

Lumpur Norman Bruce, Bayan Eastern Visayas chair, was gunned down in Borongan, Eastern Samar on Thursday morning, according to Bayan Central Luzon chair Renan Polintan who pointed to Palparan as the culprit.

"He's not welcome here," Polintan said of the general whose last called the "butcher of Mindoro and the Visayas."

Palparan's new assignment, according to the Bayan leader, "signaled a new round of summary executions, disappearances, illegal arrests and searches, and raids in villages" in Central Luzon where 13 of the group's leaders and members were killed while five others were missing since January this year.

"It is not enough that he's removed from Eastern Visayas and reassigned here. He should be charged, punished for the many crimes he has committed," Polintan said.

The Gloucs pass as Pantaleoning Bombolacao (she declared Palparan's transfer to the 7th ID.

In a phone interview after brief interview also at the Rizal Hagupayan in Nueva Ecija on Thursday, Palparan said he "had nothing to do" with Bruce's death.

"I left Samar's Visayas on days ago. Those people have their own enemies. I have become a very convenient target for their blaming because I'm very known as an anti-insurgency operator of the government," he told the bosses.

He urged an investigation, though, to clear the military.

Of the hostility of leftist groups in Central Luzon, Palparan said: "Their intrusion are suspicious. They don't want the region."

Bruce had just dropped out of a meeting in Borongan when two armed men on a motorcycle shot him several times, hitting him in the head.

Bruce is a vocative officer of the provincial government and regional chair of Bayan Muna. A Bayan statement said from February to May this year, arrests in the region recorded an average of 70 cases of human rights violations by the military per month, or more than two cases per day. Estelito Urgio, PIO Central Luzon Desk and Cyrus Ombaohan and Joy Gabriel, PIO Visayas Bureau with AP report

Licuanan's tough work habits recalled by staffer at SBMA

By Tonette Orejas
PIO Central Luzon Desk

LICUANAN

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pamela Licuanan III is heavily missed at the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Subic-Clark Alliance for Development (SCAD).

Since he resigned on Aug. 26, the "very professional man, the very exacting boss" has instigated his old Philips Navy Licuanan's assistant and the interim head administrator.

"The last months of [Licuanan] were for us to continue with the programs," her superior Wednesday.

He represented Licuanan in the meeting of the Bases Conversion Development Authority officials with Pampanga officials.

All that Licuanan wanted was for the Scad to stick to its mission of developing the Subic-Clark growth corridor by integrating and enabling strategic efforts to promote investment and trade platforms as he had to become Asia's best logistics and aviation hub, Novi said.

Licuanan's departure, he said, did not come as a big surprise. He once has said he could down at the job.

Novi said Licuanan called the meeting after he discussed with President Macapagal-Arroyo his plan to leave the Scad and the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority where he is the concurrent chair.

Licuanan, former president of the Subic Land Inc. and served after by the Subic-owned companies, resign of both posts in August 2004. He he was announced his joining her administration in September this year.

The President, in past interviews with reporters in Clark, said she did not have a hard time convincing Licuanan to help her administration and of the general reform he called the "hardest of Mindoro and the Visayas."

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GMA endorses resolution on ecozone tax exemption

By Tonette Orejas
PIO Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—President Macapagal-Arroyo has certified in both chambers of Congress the "necessity of the immediate enactment" of a bill that seeks to bring tax exemptions to firms in former American bases that were turned into economic zones in Central and Northern Luzon.

The last support to Joint Resolution No. 9 to the Clark investors and Locators Association (Cila), representing more than 300 companies here, lobbied for legislative action on the fourth of four Congress Committees that nullified the local incentives in Clark in Pampanga and Subic, Camp John Hay in Baguio City and Poro Point in La Union.

The proposed corrective measure was filed by Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in May.

Ms Arroyo told Senate President Pimentel Jr. and De Venecia that the approval of the resolution would "address the urgent need to prevent the loss of huge investments in the country."

The measure, according to the President, would "restore the status quo ante of the Clark Special Economic Zone that investors already granted would be fully respected."

Ms Arroyo was minute when the Bases Conversion and Development Act of 1992 (Republic Act 7227) was enacted.

However, the Supreme Court issued a flaw to the law saying in its July 09 ruling that RA 7227 only expressly provided for the grant of incentives to the Subic Bay Freeport in Bataan, Zambales and Olongapo City.

It fails to make any similar grant in favor of other economic zones, including the Clark zone," the court said, acting on the case filed by the Garment Dti Reform manufacturing, Philippine Association of Meat Processors, Bukidnon ng Mangguwang Pilipino and Federation of Free Farmers.

The Supreme Court reached the same decision in the case of Camp John Hay in October 2003.

The Cila on Thursday greeted the President's support with optimism, hoping that through it local and foreign investors would regain their privileges that lured them to do business here.

Calling the situation critical, Cila said in a statement signed by its 13 officials that opportunity investments of P19 billion, invest and bring worth P800 million annually and more than 34,000 workers were at stake.

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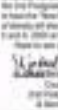


PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

1000 OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CORPORATE MEMBERS

OTHER PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

Kabayan wants Cotabato colors in SEA Games

BARE EYE

Bacah Trinidad

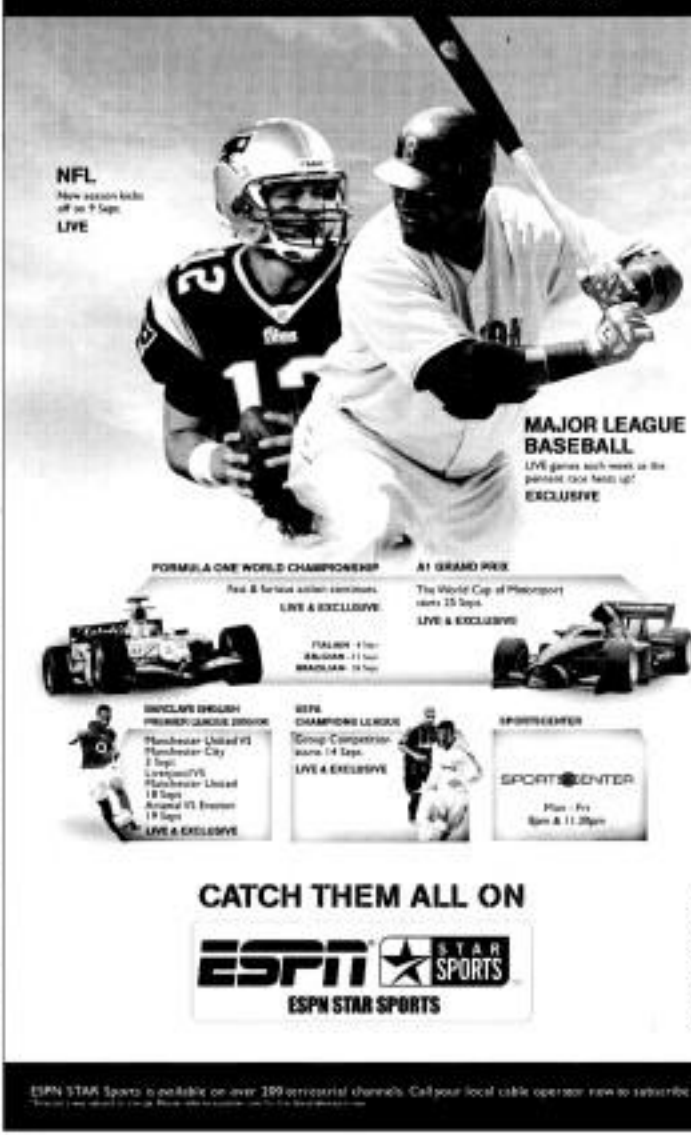
14 Panabo pugs going for golds

By Bacah Trinidad

Mapua, SSC decide Final Four pairings

WHERE THE STARS COME OUT TO PLAY

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2005



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MINING STRIKE
A group of protesters expresses their support for workers of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp. who are on strike for two months now.

Solons demand probe of strike in mining firm

MARIVENE, Benguet—Representatives of three party-list groups filed a resolution at the House of Representatives to ask its committee on labor and employment to investigate the complaints of striking workers at the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. here.

House Resolution 922 was endorsed by Representatives Satur Ocampo, Joel Virador and Teodoro Casiño (Bayan Muna), Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano (Anakpawis), and Liza Maza (Gabriela Women's Party) on Aug. 31.

It said the LCMC management violated provisions of the labor code that afford "full protection to labor and assure the rights of workers to form unions, to collective bargaining and to strike."

The party-list representatives asked the committee to conduct an inquiry to end of big, alarm "into the anti-union and anti-labor practices" of LCMC, including "harassment, physical violence, arbitrary arrests and detention" committed against the 1,680 striking workers.

The strike, which started on June 2, was prompted by disagreements over terms of the collective bargaining agreement, benefits and dismissal of 19 officials of the Lepanto Employees Union (LEU) and at least 211 workers who participated in the month-stoppage.

Nelda Marilong, LCMC operations manager, said they are open to every investigation that would be led by the lawmakers.

But he said the company would not accept the demands of the workers to reinstate the 19 dismissed union officers.

The dismissed workers could file an illegal dismissal case with the National Labor Relations Commission "so we could still reconsider them," he said.

He said that LCMC has retrenched 310 workers who were earlier dismissed.

Although workers have accepted the proposal of the Department of Labor and Employment to increase wages by P25, P27 and P28 for the three-year CBA, the strike will continue until the company reinstates the 19 union officials and other workers, Hinon Lepngan, LEU president, said.

At least 1,000 workers and their supporters from Cordillera provinces staged a rally here on Tuesday to ask the LCMC to resume negotiations with the striking workers. Desiree Caluza, PIR/Northern Luzon Bureau

Palawan execs take China trip

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Eight Palawan mayors and a vice mayor headed for China yesterday to woo Chinese businessmen to invest in the province.

Gov. Joel Reloj led the Palawan delegation, along with his wife Frances, two department heads, a provincial officer and five board members. Some local businessmen also joined the trip. The trip sparked criticism from Palawenos.

According to Angel Aviz, chair of the Palawan Small and Medium Development Council, the trip was untimely for local government officials because the country was in a serious financial crisis.

He said there were more things to focus on at this time, although "there is nothing wrong with going abroad."

Former municipal auditor Sharmie Bendoy commented over a local radio station that the trip would only be a "junket" for local government officials.

Some said it was a waste of people's money and spending should be prioritized because Palawan had the biggest fatalities in terms of loans for fiscal year 2004, according to a Commission on Audit report.

The province incurred total loans of P934.2 million based on COA's Consolidated Balance Sheet as of Dec. 31, 2003 for the country's 71 provinces, 171 cities and 1,493 municipalities.

But others, especially the supporters of the provincial government, said there was nothing wrong with the trip. Arjhil Asuncion, PDN Correspondent Carmen Sharmaine

Bright prospects seen for ethanol production

BACOLOD CITY—"The future of the sugar industry in Negros Occidental is in ethanol.

So said Rafaelcon Dep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, the principal author of House Bill 20001 that seeks to promote the use of ethanol as alternative transport fuel and to establish the National Fuel Ethanol Program for the purpose.

He explained that the future of the sugar industry in the province is in ethanol production because the price of sugar would drop when tariffs on the entry of imported stocks was lifted.

But ethanol, he added, would allow sugar planters to earn much more. Ethanol is an alternative energy source produced from crops such as sugar, corn, grain, sorghum and wheat.

The much-needed ethanol-blended gasoline will make the province a leading producer of ethanol in the near fut- ire in six years, he added.

"Negros sugar planters will be the fuel barons of the future," Zubiri told the Reporter in a phone interview on Tuesday.

He said San Carlos Bioenergy Inc. (SCBI) in northern Negros Occidental is expected to begin producing ethanol by the second half of 2005.

More ethanol plants are expected to be built in the province, he added. "Negros has a capacity for nine ethanol plants," the congressman said.

The SCBI is a joint venture of Bronzeoak Philippines, the National Development Corp. and three groups of sugar planters.

These are the Silahis Chemicals Inc., Guimbal-industria Hermanos, and the 121 Farmworkers Multipurpose Co-op, which signed an agreement to supply 200,000 of the 260,000 tons of sugar needed by SCBI annually.

Zubiri was in Malacañang on Monday to join the launching of the E 10 Program (10 percent ethanol-blended gasoline).

Lirla Ireneo, PIR/Visayas Bureau

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10 NGOs join hands to help Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu

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dawan conflict.

They called the consortium "Samahangan Ilocandia," Bontuyan means helping each other; Ilocandia is an acronym for Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi.

"We've joined hands to help break the cycle of poverty in Mindanao," said former Agusan del Norte Governor Ernesto Garilao, now executive director of ABM Mutual Center. "Thirty years ago, these people were poor. Today, they are still poor."

Deportation sparks idea

Former Ambassador Leonard Dee, cochair of Tabang Mindanao, thought of the idea of gathering 10 NGOs after seeing thousands of Filipinos, virtually all ownmen workers from Mindanao, being forcibly deported by the Malaysian police in a renewed crackdown of undocumented aliens in Sabah in retaliation for the 2000 Jolo kidnap-for-ransom of some 170,000 undocumented Filipinos who fled to Malaysia for lack of job opportunities in the country.

He requested a meeting with the top brass of MNLF to assess the situation in Mindanao.

They are Tabang Mindanao, Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), Yuchengco and Equity Foundation (PEF), Ayala Foundation, Gawad Kalinga, Mawari Philippines, Gamudo Foundation, Mawari Philippines Foundation, Philippine Development Assistance Programme, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Philippines, Land Conservation Philippines Program (LCPP), and the Asian Institute of Management Mount Centre.

Comprehensive

"What can be done?" Dee posed the question to the officials of the resource ends, MNLF in the first meeting.

He assured the Tripoli top to put Davao and together in providing a blueprint for "comprehensive human security and development program" to the three Mindanao provinces.

To find some answers, the top managers of the foundations subsequently held series of workshops to identify problems and offer solutions.

Another meeting was held to review the findings of a study on human security and governance in Sulu by a study conducted by the Ateneo de Davao University.

Causes of poverty

Based on the study, poverty in the three Mindanao provinces arose as result of "historical inequities, legal landlessness, and the prolonged conflict."

Simply put, it means that the three provinces, though rich in natural resources, are poor since the resources are exploited by the Manila-based government and businessmen, residents lose their control of land, the wealth of land gets borne, and the list, the devastation caused by the conflict.

Subsequent meetings and discussions led to the establishment of the Ateneo study, the drawing of an implementation process, and an interim task force of rules and responsibilities among the members.

In the beginning, Garilao said the various NGOs had to enter certain consensus in order for them to work together effectively.

First, what can be done collaboratively? Second, can they actually work together? Third, can they work with the local institutions in Mindanao? They all said yes to all the questions.

P100-M fund

The 10 NGOs have so far put together P100 million to fund various projects in the three provinces. One of those projects with an aggregate worth of P20.3 million are now in progress.

These are on water, environment, livelihood, leadership and skills training. The rest of the projects are on health, education, agriculture, peace building and governance training.

"We don't make any distinction whether they are Christians or Muslims, or ismael or what have you," Garilao said of the recipients of the projects. "What matters is that they are residents. We will try to help all."

But more than offering monetary assistance, Garilao said, Bataan wants the local leaders and institutions to be more responsive to the needs of the community and the residents to be more accountable.

Edsa approach

The consortium's approach, he added, is to allow residents to take "co-ownership" of the identified problems, say, the residents who have no access to drinking water will submit a project proposal to the group which in turn will help them solve the problem and train the residents how to maintain it.

In essence, Garilao said, the program literally means that the spirit of Edsa People Power is going to Mindanao. "We emulate vibrant communities like in Bantayan, Cebu, which have a high social capital, high trust, high social cohesion, high economy, and a culture of peace and respect for the differences and diversity," he added.

The consortium has identified 30 sectoral leaders whom they can work with in each of the three provinces by different projects.

Representatives of the consortium met with the sectoral leaders in the provincial capital in Jolo, Sulu for a two-day workshop that began last Monday. The leaders were asked to formally unite their respective sector project proposals that can be sponsored by any or all of the 10 consortium. The Ford Foundation funded the workshop.

International donors

Using their individual clout and access to international funding community, the members of the consortium have pledged to tap the commitment of donor institutions such as the World Bank, USAID, Japan International Cooperation Agency to attend a meeting with the 150 sectoral leaders of the three provinces on Sept. 12. The meeting will allow the local leaders to tell their projects and get funding support from the foreign donors.

Tabang itself boasts of resources-rich members such as the Benigno Aquino Jr Foundation, Ayala Foundation, Mercedes, GMA Foundation, Inc., ABS-CBN Foundation, and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, among others.

Dee's cochairs are Ayala's Fernando Zobel de Ayala and Inquirer's Alexandra Prieto Romualdez. It has been actively involved in rescuing Subik and Southeast in Mindanao for the last seven years, especially during calamities.

Until 2010

PBSP, ABM Mutual Center and LGSP help train and develop leaders. Colorado works against child abuse. Bataan is involved in relief and rehabilitation. PEF is on livelihood and microfinancing. WWF works on environment protection.

The consortium committed to the Subiko project until 2010 and is willing to extend efforts to NGOs members.

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Airline operators air . . .

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get to wish.

Pat Go Airline Operators Council (AOC), alliance to golden and should be particularly welcomed by harried passengers flying in and out of airports.

The group recently broached the idea of turning Sulu into a "silent airport."

The AOC is the organization of all international airlines, including Philippine Airlines (PAL) and Cebu Pacific.

"We know some people have a disharmonious control, but in an airport, you should try to calm the passengers by giving them a peaceful environment," AOC vice chief Santiago Medrana III said.

Relocate rondalla

AOC also wanted the rondalla, which plays at the concourse as passengers head toward the immigration area, to be "relocated."

Medrana said living was stressful to passengers. "Sometimes how passengers feel after disembarking from the plane. They'd have all those noise in an airport."

Global trend

"Silent airports have been the trend in the aviation industry since more than a decade ago, wherein unnecessary noise such as constant paging of flights and passengers, are eliminated," AOC Colonel Leandro Nadal told reporters Wednesday.

Nadal said the AOC and its counterparts in Southeast Asian countries initiated the "silent airport" campaign after they organized themselves into a regional association.

Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok Airport, Singapore's Changi Airport, Inchon Airport, Narita International Airport, and most European airports are among the "silent airports" in the world, according to Nadal.

No PA system

He said the AOC would like to adopt the scheme in the Naia Terminal 1 if the project succeeds, it could be adopted in all the country's international airport.

He said the AOC officials at the group was hoping that the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) would be receptive to the proposal.

In a "silent airport," announcements via the public address system (PA) like those about "missing" passengers, people who have not yet boarded when their flight is already supposed to have and last call for" arrive, as well as announcements to passengers will also be eliminated, according to Medrana.

He said that in "silent airports," all passengers would be checking their flight details at the Flight Information Display System (FIDS).

Only very important announcements are made over the PA system in a "silent airport," he added.

Visual aids needed

But Miaa General Manager Alfonso Cusi said in a phone interview that the proposal had to be evaluated carefully.

GMA has won some time but it ain't over yet–FVR

By Fe Zamora

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's forces maine uncertain until the House is a presidential veto on the impeachment complaints filed against her, according to former President Fidel Ramos.

"There is no clear mandate. That's a big question mark," Ramos said in an interview yesterday on the program of the government-owned Channel 4 in Quezon City.

"It appears that the majority has won the first round, but let us not forget that there is still a plenary session that could be the final opportunity [for the opposition]," he said.

Ramos, however, pointed out that the situation was not as politically critical for Ms Arroyo as the one on July 8, when a number of Cabinet officials led by then Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima quit their posts and called on her to resign.

"She has won some time," Ramos said, adding that last July 8, it was only "a matter of hours" before "things [would] have turned our way or the other."

But he said the President "must not be complacent" because "what she won is a concession in time; she has a terminal date."

Ramos said intensified street protests should be expected, and called on authorities to be prepared.

He said, however, that he did not expect to see street protests in the magnitude of Edsa I in 1986 (which toppled Ferdinand Marcos), and Edsa II in 2001 (which deposed Joseph Estrada).

"I am not seeing nationwide outrage," Ramos said, stressing that economic factors, rather than Mr Arroyo's continued stay in Malacañang, were the more compelling concern for protest.

Ramos, who is credited with "saving" Ms Arroyo from possible ouster on July 8 with his proposed shift in the form of government from presidential to parliamentary, admitted that they had been talking on the phone.

He said he and Mr Arroyo had been discussing relevant issues, but refused to categorically say if she had sought his advice on the impeachment complaints.

Ramos said he was in have seen Ms Arroyo during the Iftamar Magsaysay Awards the other day, but she did not show up.

Asked if the President was being facetious remarks, Ramos snapped: "She is not facetious kinds. She is just strong-jaw."

Bishop Cruz: President a puzzlement

From page A1

tension will be minimum."

Cruz said that considering the damaging allegations against her, the President should have been allowed to defend herself in an impeachment trial.

Besides, he observed, it was Ms Arroyo herself who had asked that she be given the chance to do so.

Cruz said pro-Arroyo lawmakers apparently ignored the appeal by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines not to turn the impeachment proceedings into an exercise of political partisanship.

"We may deny this the truth but it will remain the truth," he said.

In its July 18 statement, the CBCP said impeachment, along with the formation of a truth commission and Ms Arroyo's overtight resignation, was not against the Gospel.

The CBCP in Manila yesterday refused to comment on the result of the impeachment hearings.

Cardinal Vidal

But Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal's spokesman said the prelate did not know the purpose of Vidal's trip but presumed that the latter would be meeting with some Church officials in Manila.

"This is another step that they have to take because of what has happened, especially that the CBCP had strongly endorsed the impeachment process..." Tabay said.

Dakila also said Vidal flew to Manila to deny the rumor that he was having constant meetings with the camp of former President Corazon Aquino.

Another appeal for unity

Malacañang has appealed for unity now in the wake of the House's dismissal of all three impeachment complaints against the President.

"The President's detractors should learn when to throw in the towel so that we can already get on with the real business of the people," Ms Arroyo's spokesperson, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, said in a statement issued yesterday.

Protest actions

"The political turmoil and the steeply rising prices of oil have inflicted much difficulty on the entire nation. We are confident that the political atmosphere would ease up in due time to enable the nation to refocus on drawing up fiscal stability, searching for energy alternatives and fighting poverty," Bunye said.

The militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan announced plans for a rally on Sept. 7 to denounce the conduct of the President's allies in the House.

"We might as well have a people's court to try the [impeachable offenses] committed by Ms Arroyo. We encourage our lawmakers, prosecutors and witnesses to bring their case to the people," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes.

"They can present the evidence that they were not allowed to show during the impeachment hearings. The Filipino people will [be the] judge," he said.

Reyes challenged the President's allies to present their case once to the people. "Pro-Arroyo lawmakers are also welcome to attend if they want to defend [her]. A people's court is certainly more democratic compared to the sham hearings in Congress," he said.

'Pleased' GMA

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita described the hearings conducted by the House committee on justice as "a vindication of the rule of the law."

Speaking at the formal opening of the National Peace and Conference Month at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City, Ermita said Ms Arroyo was "pleased" with the decision of the majority legislators to uphold and then kill the original impeachment complaint filed by Oliver Lozano, effectively junking the amended version of the opposition.

He pointed out, however, that the process was not completely dead because prosecution-bent lawmakers could still try to reunite 79 votes at the plenary deliberation to send the amended complaint back to the justice committee.

Meanwhile, he said, political leaders should remember to stay within the bounds of legal processes and the Constitution.

Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano said efforts would continue to gather the signatures of 79 legislators although the opposition's main efforts would focus on building mass support for the ousting of the President.

But Bunye said 79 votes was "a pipe dream."

Atty Romulo Macalintal, Ms Arroyo impeachment lawyer, told reporters: "We believe that the public will welcome [the justice committee's] decision as this will allow us to move on."

Bayan's Reyes warned of massive[,] one-way or the other."

6 candles at 6 p.m.

"BLOWING prayer" Robert Reyes yesterday launched "Six at Six," aimed at lighting seven million votes from lawmakers to move the required 79 in time for the Monday plenary.

"We are urging the Filipino people to light six candles at 6 p.m. every night [outside their homes, schools and offices] until we get six more votes," the activists' priest said.

"This is to offer prayer," he added. "We pray that we will find six more lawmakers who are after the truth. This is also a call to hope—to show that hope is not dead, that the [impeachment] process is not dead."

Gloria saw it all . . .

From page A1

an interest because the case is all about her," said Ermita.

Opposition lawmakers said the President had taken a direct hand in the impeachment case, calling congressmen, their friends and allies. She had also invited lawmakers to the Palace to get them on her side.

Malacañang claimed there was nothing wrong with this, saying the Executive is much too respectful to barge in constant touch with the legislators.

Ms Arroyo was happy and satisfied at the outcome of the impeachment case, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

For the second straight day though, the President did not make a public appearance.

Rigoberto Tiglao of the Presidential Management Staff defended the last-minute changes in the President's schedule. "The appointments of the President change from day to day and it is not easy to ascertain her schedule until it actually happens," said Tiglao.

Yesterday, the Presidency merely issued media statements that had nothing to do with her case.

Ms Arroyo expressed sympathies to the United States and Iraq for the recent tragedies there—the devastation caused by a powerful hurricane in the US Gulf Coast and the deadly stampede in a bridge in Baghdad.

Back to normal today

Today, the President is to attend the 60th anniversary of the surrender of World War II Japanese Gen. Yamashita in Kiangan, Ifugao, and proceed to Naval, Biliran to attend the province's 100th anniversary celebration.

Presidential political adviser Gilbert Teodoro conceded that "the glitches on the mid-year economic report" he said the President was "rather mad" on hearing that the impeachment complaint had been junked.

"What's important is for us to find the lie given as much elbow room as possible to be able to focus on the essential task of governance, especially now that the country has to deal with the energy crisis," Teodoro said.

Bayan said the country's problems invited Ms Arroyo's "full and undivided attention."

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SC cites Purisima for indirect contempt; sets ₱20,000 fine

By Artemio Pascual

THE SUPREME Court found former Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima "guilty of indirect contempt of court" and fined him ₱20,000. Purisima must pay the amount within 10 days after the court's resolution shall have become final.

The high court threw out Purisima's claim that he had been "misquoted" by media when he was reported as having said that President Macapagal-Arroyo had influenced the tribunal to issue a temporary restraining order on the VAT law on Aug. 1 amid growing calls for her to resign.

Purisima along with nine other members of the Cabinet and senior heads resigned on July 9 and demanded that Ms Arroyo do the same.

"It is very true that Purisima felt that the media misconstrued his actions, then he should have immediately rectified it. He should not have waited until the court required him to explain before he dared being made such statements," the decision penned by Associate Justice Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez said.

"Purisima should know that these press releases placed the court into dubious disrespect and public contempt, diminished public confidence, promoted distrust in the court and assailed the integrity of its members. The court already took a hesitating before Purisima made any disclaimer. The damage has been done, so to speak," the court said.

Purisima earlier apologized to the Supreme Court for allegedly making "statements" that the President had pressured the high tribunal into issuing a three-to-one ruling on the VAT law.

Manila reporters quoted Purisima as saying that the President had expressed an intention to delay the implementation of the VAT law, contending that partly drove him and nine other members of the Cabinet to tender their irrevocable resignation.

He said that although he believed the President "wanted to postpone the implementation of the VAT," she later clarified to him that she (Ms GMA) was influenced or pressured to issue the TRO against its implementation.

Purisima resigned, the 6-year imprisonment penalty for indirect contempt.

High court upholds VAT but TRO stays till final ruling

From page A1

cords exemptions on a wide range of goods and services.

The expanded VAT took on exemptions on the sale of electricity and oil products, coal, mineral gas and indigenous fuels; cereal, sweet seeds and non-food agricultural products; domestic animal transport; medical and legal services; medical, dental and hospital equipment; and services by cooperatives.

The law also raises the corporate income tax to 35 percent from 32 percent for three years. The rate falls to 30 percent in 2009.

The court, by a majority vote, agreed to dismiss all the five petitions and uphold the constitutionality of the law. The law itself is constitutional," Abas said at a press conference.

Objections to some sections

He said several justices decided to declare some sections unconstitutional.

But the Supreme Court spokesman declined to name those who did not meet the majority vote of eight, as the "objectionable" provisions were "fight sections are required to declare a particular section unconstitutional," he said.

Abas said the court was expecting to write sections, it was disappointed in call the voting 13-8, but a majority was 8 to nine.

Solon economists and traders welcomed the court ruling. "This is another boon for the poor and I am pleased expect a quick out of the lit-

per dollar level," said Lidlow Hardoon, head of currency strategy at Standard Chartered in Singapore.

"This was one of the key fiscal reforms of the government and so the peso should rally."

Picket

But a militant group mauled the VAT law as it would further push up the prices of a wide range of goods and services.

Even before the Supreme Court announced the ruling, members of Lambat Sa Buwis Coalition from Iloilo City picketed the high court.

"If it the expanded VAT that should be killed, not the impoundment process," said PISC vice chair Willard Fontalera in a statement.

Higher fares, low taxes

Upon the VAT law's implementation, fares to be collected by the Supreed Ferry for the Manila-Cebu route would go up from ₱1,680.00 ₱1,890 and the Manila-Batangas route from ₱1,430 to ₱1,675, according to a Supreferry customer service representative.

Philippine airlines will increase its fare for the Manila-Cebu route from ₱7,021 (round trip) to ₱8,416, and the Manila-Davao route from ₱9,101 to ₱10,886, according to Rene Ballesteros, manager for publications of PAL corporate communications.

The Department of Finance said the expected additional revenue to be generated this year from the VAT law would be lower, and would only be anywhere between P7 billion and P10 billion because of the delayed implementation.

Had the VAT law been implemented since its supposed effectivity date of July 1, the estimated incremental revenues this year was estimated to be between P28 billion and P32 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito "Gary" Teves said the VAT law would be implemented seven days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation. The BOF is officially on the law as soon as the Supreme Court announces the lifting of the suspension.

Starting 2006, the government expects to generate additional revenues of P80 billion every year. The projected revenues include the impact of the increase of the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent starting next year.

Cushion

"The VAT law would provide a cushion should there be any setbacks in revenue collection," he told reporters.

The national government has set the budget deficit target for 2005 at P146 billion, but in light of the better-expected performance in the first seven months of the year, made it available that the deficit figure for the full year would be lower than the official target.

As of July, the national government's budget deficit stood at only P82.6 billion, or P53.6 billion lower than the programmed P136.2 billion for the seven-month period. This made it easier officials promise that the actual budget deficit for the full year, even without the implementation of the VAT, would only be at P130 billion or lower.

Toward zero budget deficit

Struggling with widespread tax evasion and corruption in the bureaucracy, the Philippines recorded an annual fiscal surplus only four times since 1986 when the late strongman ferdinand Marcos was toppled by a popular revolt. It recorded surpluses from 2004 to 1997 during the presidency of Fidel Ramos.

Teves said the VAT law could accelerate the attainment of the government's programmed goal of a zero budget deficit. The President wants to erase the budget deficit by 2010.

Without the VAT, the DOF projected that the national government's budget would be balanced by 2008.

The government expects the country's credit rating agencies to reconsider their decision to change their outlook on the Philippines' investment of the Negative Category rating.

Many analysts and political observers believed the July 1 decision to freeze the tax law better allow it easier into effect as a state salvo President Macapagal-Arroyo was facing the worst crisis of her presidency over electoral fraud allegations.

Ms Arroyo has since cleared up her presidency and is on the verge of defeating opposition attempts to impeach her in Congress, but she is still struggling with record low popularity ratings and discontent over rising energy prices.

"All in all this was to some extent anticipated by markets. But sentiment wise, it is good news and welcome, said Claudio Piani, currency strategist at JP Morgan in Singapore.

"The wider issue of Ms Arroyo and the impeachment is still a concern."

Tax mapping

As the DOF prepares for the implementation of the VAT law, it has lined up several administrative measures to ensure that the revenues expected from the tax measure would be collected.

Teves said the DOF was looking at expanding the coverage of the "Tax Mapping" program of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, to attached agency.

Under the Tax Mapping program, revenue personnel are sent on the field to investigate the tax compliance of business establishments, such as checking whether they issue receipts.

The finance chief said the DOF was looking at including home builds, especially those in pesh villages, in the Tax Mapping program.

"If we see that a residence has an cars and that the family is declaring an annual income of only ₱100,000, then we can suspect there is a evading issue," Teves said.

But the finance chief said the DOF would have to seek advice from experts on the legality of its plan.

Benchmarking

Trade Secretary Lucio Tan said the DOF and the BIR would implement an industry benchmarking method to have a good estimate of one's tax liabilities. He had not benchmarking. The DOF and the BIR would set the average income and tax liabilities of companies to a certain industry.

If the tax payments of a company are much lower than the average for that industry, then the company can be investigated for possible tax evasion, he said.

The DOF said it was important that measures to prevent VAT evasion are in place to ensure the government would meet its revenue targets.

Hard-to-tax sector

Teves also said the DOF would study ways to collect payments from property and real estate taxes.

Dumped, operators are considered a hard-to-tax sector because of the difficulty of determining their actual incomes. They are not required to issue receipts. With a report from Reuters

Bush: One of worst natural disasters in US history

From page A1

stadium began a slow exodus on Wednesday, as the first of nearly 25,000 refugees left the immediate surroundings of the football stadium and were transported in buses to the Astrodome in Houston, 360 km away.

Confirmed in the Superdome and Convention Center were "three" but no air conditioning, the telltales were hacked up, and the stench was so bad that medical workers were made in they suffered nausea.

Outside the stadium, bodies were starting to pile up at the morgue in hard-hit Hurricane County. Forty corpses had been brought to the morgue and officials expected the death toll in the county—itself well above 100.

'Totally wiped out'

Tempers were beginning to flare in the aftermath of the storm. Nelson said a man fatally shot his cat in the head over a bag of rat in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

President George W. Bush flew over New Orleans and parts of Mississippi's hurricane-battered coastline in Air Force One. From atop its last stakes, he said. "It's totally wiped out . . . It's devastating. It's got to be double-devastating on the ground."

"We're dealing with one of the worst natural disasters to ever hit this country," Bush said during a televised address from the White House, which most victims could not see because power remained out to 1.7 million Gulf Coast residents.

The federal government dispatched helicopters, warships and ultra MAL water-rescue teams in one of the biggest relief operations in US history aimed at plucking residents from rooftops in the last of the "golden 72 hours" rescuers said was crucial to saving lives.

As fires burned from broken natural gas mains, the skies above the city buzzed with the Coast Guard Coast Guard helicopters frantically dropping baskets on roofs where victims had been stranded since the storm roared in with a 220-kph fury on Monday.

'Help us'

As one apartment building, two children held up a giant sign

crowded with the words "Help us!"

Looters used garbage cans and inflatable mattresses to float away with food, like pasta, tuna, can sliced, TV sets—even guns. Some pharmacies, though, commandeered a forklift and used it to push up the doors and windows and break through the glass. The driver of a moving boom has surrendered the vehicle to thugs threatening the owner's life.

Roller water asking residents to give up any firearms before they evacuated neighborhoods because officers desperately needed the firepower. Some officers who had been stranded on the roof of a hotel said they were shot at.

Top priority

Police said their first priority remained getting food, and mostly just water. They said rescued the looting. But Nagin later said the looting had gotten so bad that stopping the thieves became the top priority for the police department.

'Heavily populated'

"They are starting to get closer to heavily populated areas — because that's where the water is going to stop it right now," Nagin said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Hundreds of people wandered up and down downtown Interstate 10 in search of food and water, leaving the highway into New Orleans from the east—pushing shopping carts, barrels racks, anything they could find to carry their belongings.

On the side of the I-10, trucks that were still open, people waved at passing cars with empty water jugs, begging for relief. Hundreds of people appeared to have spent the night on a crippled highway.

Mass evacuation

Nagin, whose pre-hurricane evacuation order got most of his city of a half a million out of harm's way, estimated that 50,000 to 100,000 people had remained. He said that 14,000 to 15,000 people a day could be evacuated in coming journeys.

"We have to," Nagin said. "It's not living conditions."

He also expressed concern about people staying in the water. "People walking in that water with those dead bodies, it can get in your pores, you don't have to drink it."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency was considering housing people on cruise ships, in tent cities, mobile home parks, and in called floating dormitories.

Soup of sewage, gas, trash

The floodwaters mounted into the city's streets from two levees breaks near Lake Pontchartrain a day after New Orleans thought it had escaped the worst of Hurricane Katrina's fury. The flood waters covered 80 percent of the city in some areas it nearly deep, in a rubbish-brown soup of sewage, gasoline and garbage.

Assistant Homeland Officials only the state and the Army Corps of Engineers said the water levels between the city and the lake had equalized, and water had stopped spilling into New Orleans and even appeared to be falling. But the danger was far from over.

The Corps of Engineers said it planned to use heavy-duty Chinook helicopters to drop 3,000-kg bags of sand and stone as early as Wednesday night into the 150-metre gap in the 17th Canal levee.

Blocked

But the agency said it was having trouble getting the sandbags and dozens of highway barriers to the site because the city's infrastructure was flooded by loose barges, boats and large debris. AP

THE CRISIS sub of recovering birdies continues three days after the monster storm smashed the Gulf Coast, this one's at the University of Southern Mississippi's Hurricanes Hall Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Pass Christian, Mississippi. AFP/AM

Chavez slams Bush for delayed reaction

CARACAS, Venezuela: President Hugo Chavez on Wednesday blasted US President George W. Bush for waiting until after hurricane Katrina hit the United States to end his vacation in Texas.

At the same time, Chavez, a leftist leader who frequently lashes out against Bush, expressed sympathy for the storm's victims and repeated his offer to send aid workers to the devastated southern American state.

And Caps, the US ambassador of Venezuela's main natural oil giant PDVSA, announced it would donate $1 million to the Red Cross to help victims helping hurricane victims.

"For four days there were warnings that (hurricane) was going to make a direct hit on New Orleans and various media outlets here said until you must flee,' He did not say how," Chavez said, charging that the United States had no evacuation plans.

"It's the richest metropolis," he added.

The White House announced Tuesday that Bush was cutting his weekly Crawford vacation by two days. He surveyed the devastation from Air Force One on Wednesday as he flew back to Washington.

The United States and Venezuela have had a wary relationship under Chavez, whose Washington has branded a "negative force" in the region.

The Venezuelan leader has accused the United States of wanting to assassinate him and has called Bush a "jerk." AFP

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Pangalangan
Business Editor Carmela S. Mariano

CAP files for rehabilitation

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PRE-NEED giant College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. yesterday filed a petition for rehabilitation with the Makati Regional Trial Court, joining other pre-need firms in similar financial straits.

But as CAP moved to find refuge with the local court, the Makati RTC junked its motion to dismiss a class suit by plan holders filed against CAP.

The plan holders claimed CAP had committed fraud.

Gilbert Reyes, senior partner at Mendoza, Bautista & Reyes law office, said because then CAP went to court to keep its business going.

Reyes said CAP officials were prompted to file for rehabilitation after separate forces circulating that the Securities and Exchange Commission was seriously considering taking over management of the pre-need firm.

Reyes said CAP officials were afraid that the takeover would result in the liquidation of the company.

"It was becoming increasingly difficult to work out a solution without prejudicing the interest of the plan holders," Reyes said. "The whole thrust of this rehabilitation plan is we don't want to control CAP [new business]."

CAP's licenses to operate and sell plans were suspended in August 2004. It has over 700,000 plan holders.

It is the biggest pre-need firm and the third—after Pacific Plans and Philtrust Plans—to file for rehabilitation.

Based on its petition, CAP asked to be allowed to rehabilitate its business in view of its "impending inability to service its debts as they fall due, and because, at present, its assets are not sufficient to cover its liabilities."

But CAP believes that "as current financial conditions will change with the implementation of some changes in its organization, policies, strategies, operations and finances" under a so-called business development plan.

Under its rehabilitation plan, CAP plans to build up its equity and liquidity and meet prescribed cash requirements.

It also plans to build up its assets and the liquidity of its trust fund to meet maturing obligations.

CAP expects equity infusion from foreign and local investors, namely:

- $ 20-million equity infusion, where the new investor will give 60 million a year over a five-year period, beginning in 2006;

LOAN, B3

Australia bans Selecta ice cream

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE AUSTRALIAN government has imposed an indefinite ban on Philippine-made Selecta ice cream products, citing the incidence of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the country's livestock.

The decision was made by Australian quarantine officials after meeting with Philippine trade and agriculture officials, according to Ambassador Galacgac, agricultural attaché secretary.

Nihon local ice cream manufacturers with Magnolia Products, a subsidiary of San Miguel Foods Inc., has not penetrated the Australian market but has been exporting to the Middle East and other neighboring Asian countries, general manager Mayo Akino said in a separate interview.

Galacgac yesterday said the Australian Quarantine Service made the decision after it reclassified Selecta ice cream as a dairy product. It was previously classified as a confectionery.

"According to our agriculturist attaché in Australia, despite different classifications and reclassifications of Selecta to conclude that the ban should be imposed because the product's main ingredients are derived from imported and local milk," Galacgac explained.

He said that until the country has fully contained the incidence of FMD, the Philippines would not be able to export dairy products to Australia. The DA hopes to resolve the issue by mid-December.

Selecta Plaza Inc. is a subsidiary of Unilever Philippines Inc.

ICE CREAM is unhealthful as dairy product

'ISM has no one to blame but itself'

By Dexter L. Lucas

(Concluded)

THE ORDERED new campus of International School Manila (ISM) in Taguig is only three days away from being auctioned off unless the school's management and its teachers union reach a compromise agreement soon.

The campuses of the country's premiere school for children of expatriate businessmen, diplomats, and the Filipino elite are up against 167 locally hired teachers who want, for a start, discrimination against by being paid lower wages than their foreign hired counterparts.

SPECIAL REPORT

Representatives of ISM's management yesterday were unavailable for comment as they undertook last ditch efforts to stave off the Labor Department's auction on Monday.

However, ISM president Robert Ayers issued a statement through the school's publicist, saying "ISM will abide by what the Supreme Court decides."

He held out hope that the court will rule against the payment of back wages, despite ISM's setback before the Labor Department.

"We will have to wait for that because the [Supreme Court's] decision is not clear about the date of effectivity," Ayers said. "There is a pending motion from the union precisely to clarify that."

On the union front, the International School Alliance of Educators (ISAE) yesterday signified its willingness to negotiate the issue of back wages, citing the education of

LOAN, A3

CURRENCIES

AUGUST SEPTEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 56.198 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m. Sept. 1, 2004

₱ 110.88 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m. Sept. 1, 2004

GOLD: $[illegible]/oz

(in New York trading Sept. 1, 2004)

STOCK MARKET

Shares close higher

SHARE prices closed 0.23 percent higher yesterday on investors' optimism that profits ahead of a Supreme Court ruling on a recall bar legislative, [illegible] stakes said.

They said an overnight gain on Wall Street and a modest rebound in oil prices also helped to fan bullish sentiment. There was also sentiment interest in mining issues after government announced it has opened exploration rules for public bidding.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite [illegible] put on 0.64 points at 1,844.61. It traded between 1,839.80 and 1,847.93.

Volume reached 1.8 billion shares worth P[illegible] million.

Gainers outnumbered losers 86 to 76, while 50 stocks ended unchanged.

The Philippine currency averaged at P[illegible] to the dollar at end-day trade. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

Cocktales: Mike's troubled cousins /B2

P25B worth of ODA projects OKd /B4

BUSINESS

Maynilad to invest ₱500M

By Christine A. Cayton

WEST concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. will invest an additional P500 million this year to service more customers in the west zone.

Maynilad president Fredlle Tuason said the additional capital expenditure would be used to install additional pipelines and repair old ones before the year ends.

The would increase Maynilad's capex, derived from internally generated funds, to P1.25 billion this year.

"We are still targeting a positive bottom line this year with further improvement on service and area development," he told the business.

Bohol Bridge Inauguration Highlights Waagner Biro +MCE Presence in RP

The Department of Public Works and Highways and the Austrian Bridges Consortium Waagner Biro – MCE today inaugurates the completed 82 linear-meter Cowa-a Bridge in Buenavista, Bohol.

The structure forms part of the Austrian-assisted DPWH Bridge Construction Replacement Project which saw the recent completion of the 40-linear meter Calongo-an Bridge in Lambunao, Iloilo and the 36-linear meter Lingasan Bridge in Roxas, Palawan.

Under the program, Waagner Biro Philippines Inc. performs pilot bridge construction, design & supply of bridging materials, engineering services and the training of local engineers.

To date, the program has been associated in the delivery of 170 spans in 112 bridge sites totaling 7,625 linear meters.

366 Bridges completed for DILG

Waagner Biro likewise participated in the Austrian-assisted President's Bridge Program Phase II which includes the design and supply of 12,200 linear meters of bridging materials consisting of 347 bridge spans.

These bridges are spread out in 366 locations in all 15 regions of the Philippines.

One of its showcase bridges is the 3-span, double lane, 160-linear meter Tamalagan Bridge in Virac, Bicol, Waagner Biro completed in 2003.

The program includes the transfer of technical know-how from Waagner Biro to the different engineers of the various local government units.

Only bridge undamaged in Quezon floods

Another bridge constructed by Waagner Biro is the Ruyapi Bridge in General Nakar, Quezon which was the only bridge that survived the heavy flashfloods in that province last December, 2004. Typhoon "Winnie" caused severe flooding in the three coastal towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar and left more than 300 dead. The durability of the Ruyapi Bridge greatly helped in sparing more lives of residents in the area.

The 3-span, 140-linear meter Tamalagan Bridge in Virac, Bicol is a fine example of Waagner Biro's permanent modular steel bridge design.

Permanent Modular Steel Bridge: a century of engineering excellence

A 100-year-old Austrian engineering and construction company, Waagner Biro developed and perfected its bridge design starting in the early 1900s. The permanent modular steel bridge design and structure is widely utilized for heavy-duty functions and is adaptable to almost any bridge requirement. These bridges have a humanitarian life-span lifespan with high load capacity that make them suitable for any type of roads and highways.

20,000 linear meters of bridges in the Philippines

To date, Waagner Biro has constructed or has been directly involved in the construction of 416 bridges for a total of more than 20,000 linear meters. Waagner Biro has been in the Philippines since 1898 and completed its first bridge in San Miguel, Bulacan in 2001. Waagner Biro has proven its worth as a solid partner in Philippine countryside development as its structures have directly improved the lives of several million Filipinos.

The 82-linear meter Cowa-a Bridge in Barangay Cahigtican, Buenavista, Bohol.

Message

BRIDGING TRADE RELATIONS

I am pleased to confirm the commitment of the Austrian government along with the Austrian industries to further developing its bilateral partnership with the Philippines.

Demonstrated by this partnership are the efforts of Waagner Biro and its Austrian Consortium Partner MCE in the President's Bridge Program Phase II of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), which involves the construction of more than 300 permanent modular steel bridges and the Bridge Construction Replacement Project of more than 130 of these structures.

Austria remains to be a strong partner in promoting growth and development in the Philippines. This can be attested by the construction of these bridges, which have made substantial social impact on the lives of millions of Filipinos. They have contributed greatly in opening growth and bringing progress to the communities.

I am confident that with the success of the aforementioned bridge projects, the Austrian Trade Commission will be able to encourage more Austrian investments in the country, thereby strengthening the historical relations between Austria and Philippines.

DR. WALTER BOSITZ
Austrian Trade Commissioner

The 75-linear meter Ruyapi Bridge in General Nakar, Quezon was the only bridge still undamaged by the floods caused by Typhoon "Winnie" last December, 2004.

Mike's troubled cousins

PHOTO: Mike Arroyo has been finding sweet in the tricked times in these trade times, the First Gentleman's cousin, Carlos Arroyo, has been taking pains to avoid the US shores, more particularly the state of Delaware.

Arroyo, who controls the CRC Group, a firm ordered to pay $45,500 in attorney's fees by the Court of Chancery of Delaware, after the court ruled that Arroyo and top CRC executives "violated their obligations to the court and counsel".

"Arroyo engaged in related patterns of misrepresentation which ... demonstrated a lack of respect for the judicial process," the Delaware court said, giving the number-four newsman and Diego. It to pay the fees.

The Delaware action stemmed from a suit filed by the ASN Kim Eng Group, which owns 39 percent of CRC Global, alleging disappearance of substantial assets of the Delaware-based company.

Another judicial intemperance seems odd, given that a subsidiary of the ASN Kim Eng Group, the investment house ASN Kim Eng Capital Partners, is managed no less by President Arroyo's younger brother Diosdado "Kokoy" Macapagal Jr.

Closer to home, another Arroyo scion, Benito Ausensi, the Arroyo holdings chain of the misnamed Philippine Holdings, took out in 2000 a total of P200 million in advertisements—P165 million of which is monies lent—on the strength of an executive commission, but not board, approved from the two Phils-owned newspapers.

So with the Arroyo having overdue financial obligations, Ausensi is instead proposing a debt-in-equity swap, using a seven-hectare property in Alabang, controlled by another Ausensi cousin, Antonio Ausensi, as payment.

There's no hitch to the swap proposal, in the prospect Ausensi could earn end up owning Phils stock.

PAL's good + bad news

FIRST, the bad news.

Philippine Airlines is seeking government approval to impose higher fuel surcharges on fares to its international destinations, in view of the soaring oil prices.

For its popular US and Canada routes, the surcharge fare would go up by $40 with the surcharge.

The good news is that PAL has decided not to follow the Southwest and Continental directions to reduce economy class luggage allowances to 50 pounds each for two pieces of checked-in baggage.

That means those groaning bulkheads

CAP files for rehabilitation

From page B1

- Another P330 million infusion in CAP's equity—additional contributions to its true blood by members of the Cojuangco clan;
- The investment of Green Circle Properties and Resources, Inc. and Green Square Properties Inc. to the form of a 5,000 hectare property valued at P6 billion.

To meet its projected cash flow requirements for 2005 to 2013, CAP intends to sell its shares to subsidiaries and affiliates. The aim of the investors in the companies would guarantee an estimated P702 million in 2005 and 2006.

It also plans to sell its investments in real estate and golf shares, which could generate P46 million.

In addition, the sale of its real property to consumers in Asia and Taiwan, both in Cavite, would also generate an additional P170 million in 2005 and 2006.

CAP would also call in the unpaid subscription of its shareholders amounting to P140 million.

CAP also intends to secure additional loans from its directors in the amount of P105 million to address its temporary cash flow problems for 2006 and 2007.

CAP expects to ensure all plan holders who will be availing of benefits during its rehabilitation period.

However, CAP proposes to pay only 100 percent of the nation pegged on the retiree rates for effectivity 2006-2007, exclusive of other mandated fees. Retiree constitute about 75 percent of CAP's obligations to holders of traditional plans.

For holders of traditional plans, maturing after 2012, CAP proposes the payment of 100 percent rations, again exclusive of mandated fees, at levels projected for the years in which the plans mature/mature.

CAP will seek a deferment of the payment of mandated fees to all holders of traditional plans.

These mandated fees, however, will be scheduled for payment after 2012, when fund recipients are actually generated following the successful implementation of its business development plan.

For holders of fixed value plans, CAP expects to pay the full amount of the benefits as limited by CAP will still pay 100 percent of the Gross Price of each plan (undivested and fixed) at the time specified in each contract.

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

Beers that drinks every 061. Right from the West coast will remain at 70 pesetas each.

Mandarin menu, Cubao prices

THE MANCHUN Oriental is today opening a cafe at the new Gateway Mall in Cubao, right next to the LRT station, promising to deliver the same luxury-hotel standards in food and dining experience, but without the Makati price hike.

According to hotel spokesperson Chantae Chandler, the 11 a.m.-10 p.m. cafe would serve dim sum and light meals at 20 to 30 percent off the Makati price tags.

In answer to market demand, the cafe will also serve Filipino merienda fare like bihon, pancit bihon and guisadong bahi-bahi, aside from the Spanish comfort food to these rainy days, churros con chocolate.

Sightings

- MARICAR BA Immigration Commissioner Edmundo Reyes Jr. apologizing to his Del Club colleagues for his congressional ouster Ed. Jumala Jr. having signed the impeachment complaint, despite Pogoy having retired all those years the Reyes building, the former Hall House, on Roxas Boulevard;
- A bright-looking GMA aide Joey Ballos barely resolving his lunch at the Hilltop Mcdonalds, his first restaurant outing since being discharged from the hospital;
- Benigno Finance Secretary Jesse Purisima holding a hush-hush meeting with Gringo Aconcra in a poolside cogon hut at the Manila Polo Club.

Heard through the grapevine

FORMER Trade Secretary Jose Isidro has disengaged himself from the partisan politics of the "Hyun 13" group, and that was why he bagged off from attending the group's Tuesday press conference and becoming a prop to "Undoy" Salimat's lackey-performances.

Instead, the former Nestle Philippines CEO aired earlier quietly announcement on his new mission chairing the former Magsaysay Awards foundation.

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Maraming salamat po!

*Based on search assignments for 10 years: Sept. 1995 - Aug. 2005

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DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY

P25B worth of ODA projects OKd

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has approved the implementation of P25.6 billion worth of official development assistance-assisted projects intended to boost key industries, particularly information technology tourism and small hotels.

The projects will be implemented following the Bush call for government to pursue only potentially lucrative industries while the electronics sector, the country's top dollar earner, is faced with weakening global demand.

"We should now seriously look at diversifying and to lessen dependence on the electronics industry" Neda Director General Augustus Tantoco said. Besides developing other sectors is vital to attracting foreign investments which will compensate for the dwindling revenues of the electronics industry he said.

Of the P25.6 billion, P20 billion was earmarked for the Poverty Support Loan Program (PSLP), a credit facility for microfinance institutions using micro infrastructure methodology, telecommunications, transportation, tourism facilitating utilities, construction, tourism, health care and transportation.

The facility will be made available through the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), while funding will come from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

SMC unit nets $1.25M

SAN MIGUEL Pure Foods (Vietnam) Co. Ltd. posted four-fold increase in net income for the First semester of the year on sales of $11.25 million.

Formerly TTC (Vietnam) Co. Ltd., San Miguel's venture into pig farming and feed milling resulted in a 126 percent rise in net income from last year's $237,559.

Operating income also rose to $4.89 million for the period, from $977,200 last year.

San Miguel attributes the growth to efficiencies in hog farming and the application of technology used by SMC, San Miguel's feed brand, for the feed milling operations.

Sales revenue rose 32 percent to $11.778 million.

San Miguel Vietnam is expanding its hog farm to increase sow population to 12,000 from the present 7,000.

It will also use the $3 because inside its 324-hectare property to grow cassava, to be used in its feed milling operations.

San Miguel Vietnam's hog farming and feed milling facility in Binh Duong was brought from the Vietnai Tra Corp. in October 2004. San Miguel is using it as a springboard into Vietnam's huge and promising domestic market.

Energy ventures get funds

THE UNITED Nations Development Program said it would be providing boiled assets to funds for renewable energy projects through the establishment of a $2.6 million loan guarantee fund (LGF) with Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

The LGF is expected to spur lending to renewable energy projects as it addresses the perceived credit and collateral risks hindering their access to financing," UNDP resident representative Kiyo Yuka said in a statement yesterday.

The amount will serve as a partial loan guarantees mechanism that is seen to encourage various entities to engage in renewable energy development.

The fund will be made available to renewable energy project developers, including small lenders to avail renewable ener-

(continued on page 5)

gy projects.

The LGF is funded through grants from the Global Environment Facility in the UNDP's Capacity Building to Remove Barriers to Renewable Energy Development in the Philippines (CBRED) Project and to the World Bank's Rural Power Project (RPP).

Yuka said the CBRED Project assists in developing a mechanism for the facility and to ensure its development and use of renewable energy in the country.

This could be done by streamlining and rationalizing market setting strengthening the implementation of government agencies for policy development and implementation, and providing information to and fostering coordination among renewable energy stakeholders, he said.

Abigail L. Re-

DOE moves to attract investors into oil refining

By Cielnes S. Bedino

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy is studying the possibility of bringing back the tariff differential between crude and finished oil products to attract new players to the oil refining industry.

Jaime Aurea, administration director, through an executive order or amendment to the oil deregulation law, could also prevent Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. from closing down its refinery.

As present, a uniform tariff of 3 percent is imposed on both crude oil and refined petroleum products. Prior to the deregulation of the oil industry, there was a 9-percentage point difference between the duty on crude and that on finished petroleum products.

Pilipinas Shell said it might have to invest up to P60 billion starting 2006 to improve its refinery here should it decide to keep it running.

Its country manager Edgardo Chua said the company would decide whether or not to continue operating its refinery in the Philippines by 2006.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said "some form of a tariff differential may have to be put in place to make the refinery businesses all sectors economical."

The DOE, he said, was analyzing whether a tariff differential would be acceptable and at what level considering a 2007 Supreme Court ruling against it.

"We are looking at bringing back the tariff differential to create appropriate supply," said Lotilla.

The United States DOE had said the Philippines was highly vulnerable to oil supply shortages due to its reduced refining capacities.

The 1997 Oil Deregulation Law removed the tariff differential between crude oil and finished petroleum products and set the import duty of both at 3 percent. The ends stopped. Among administration later raised the tariff on both products to 5 percent.

Chua said Shell might consider keeping its refinery in the country if the government could provide sufficient incentives.

With the industry's deregulation, Caltex Philippines decided to close down its refinery and decided to focus its operations on importation and distribution. It said it was more cost-efficient to just import gasoline than distill crude oil and refined oil imports were the cause.

Petron Corp. has a refining capacity of 180,000 barrels a day and Shell has 110,000 barrels a day but both are not running to full capacity.

'ISM has no . . .

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Empowering People

The usual line

Some local businessmen think foreigners are wasting the business argument then.

"The threat of leaving constraints in their usual tone," said Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industries president Donald Dee. "Short-sighted about that too much."

Indeed, practically all court or regulatory decisions that go against the interests of foreign businessmen are followed by dire predictions of doom by the local investment scene.

These include the Supreme Court's decision to nullify the contract of a German consortium to operate Subic Terminal 3, Congress' decision to levy taxes on foreign banks' dollar deposits, investigations into the controversial IMF-GA acquisition of the California-Bataan Balikatan power plant, all the way to the high tribunal's decision to nullify the sale of Manila Hotel to Malaysian investors in the early 1990s.

For Dee, ISM has no one to blame but itself if it finds itself holding a weak hand in the ongoing negotiation spree.

"They know they've lost (the case)," the PCCI official said in a telephone interview. More importantly, Dee said, ISM practically threw the case away through neglect.

Instead, ISM officials opted to use mounting a public lobbying effort, hoping that the prospect of losing an established educational landmark will move the public and policy makers to see their point of view.

They argue that awarding P1.1 million in back wages to teachers—many of them retired—will deal a massive financial blow to the non-stock, not-profit school, possibly pushing it to insolvency.

"The Supreme Court will look at the facts," said Dee, whose business affairs deals with the labor sector. "Many companies have been closed (in the past) because of judgments in favor of the workers."

Nonetheless, Dee—like many local and foreign businessmen—are casting a bowl of prison as what they perceive to be the excessive involvement of the judiciary in the affairs of business.

Too much interference

In particular, some are now questioning the set-but-sustainable status of the courts when it comes to corporate issues...a field, critics believe, should be best left to businessmen.

"It seems that the Supreme Court has very little understanding of the economic impacts of their decisions," said business consultant Peter Wallace in an interview.

Wallace, an Australian who serves as advisor to foreign firms wanting to do business in the country said he is concerned about some court decisions which overturn prior agreements between contending parties.

In the case of ISM, Wallace disagrees with the decision of the court and the Labor Department to liquidate the salary needs of the signers with bonds.

"Different countries have different standards of living," he said. "To expect a teacher hired in New York to be paid the same wage as a teacher here is unrealistic. I think the best-served solution is pro-family face."

On top of this, Wallace believes that the decision to liquidate be back wages based on the wage pay scheme is "devastating."

"Clearly, a ruling like this is a deterrent to foreign businesses," he added.

Even foreign businessmen operating the country has closed in a riddle, partly because of concerns about a political system that allows overseas sentiments thought to be viewed in more.

"I get very few advisory clients these days," Wallace confirmed. "The issue about ISM just adds to the whole negative perception about the Philippines overseas."

Bananas for health, profit

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

AFTER you read the information below, you may see think of bananas in the same way.

We know the expression: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." But with apples being imported and draining our foreign exchange, the local banana—which provides jobs to thousands—is really the better alternative.

Health benefits

When you compare a banana to an apple, it has four times the protein, twice the carbohydrates, three times the phosphorus and five times the vitamin A and iron. It is rich in potassium and is one of the best value foods around.

Banana is high in potassium yet low in salt, so it can help address high blood pressure problems. The US Food and Drug Administration has allowed the banana industry to make official claims for the banana's ability to reduce the risk of blood pressure and stroke. A research published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that eating bananas as part of a regular diet can cut the risk of death by stroke by as much as 40 percent.

Bananas are high in fiber and can therefore help restore normal bowel action without resorting to laxatives. For ulcers, the banana is used as a dietary tool against intestinal disorders because of its soft texture. Its neutralizers over acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.

For stress, its high level of potassium helps normalize the heart beat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates the body's water balance. Regarding overweight, the Institute of Psychology in Austria found potassium at work leads to sweeping an unaided foods like chocolate and sweet products. In a study covering 5,000 hospital patients, the most obese were more likely to be in high pressure jobs "in control bleeding" at levels, reaching as high carbohydrates. Foods like bananas instead of sugar rich foods is recommended. Iron for Asian Unite, cubbing the affected area with the pulps of the banana skin may be more successful at reducing swelling and irritation than chemical based creams.

Economic significance

When describing Philippine agriculture, it is often said that corn, sugar and coconut occupy 20 percent each of our land area, with sugar overplaying 4 percent. Banana is rarely mentioned, it since accurate picture is provided by Francisco A. Mooy, the international coordinator of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) regional working group, on Cracking and Weed Resources for Southeast Asia, and a Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bureau (BAE, Last June 2005, he published the following table:

Area, production and value of the important crops

Crop	Area (thousand hectares)	Production (millions)	Value of production (billion pesos)
Rice	4,000	13.5	110.0
Corn	3,430	4.0	32.0
Coconut	3,214	14.1	30.7
Sugar	380	24.5	21.0
Banana	410	5.4	30.1

From the above table, we see that banana covers a greater area and has a production value 50 percent more than sugar. And yet it has received less attention than sugar, partly because the sugar industry is much better organized.

Today, bananas are the main fruit in international trade. It ranks first in the world in terms of volume. According to Francisco Lorenzo, vice president of the Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters board in Davao, there is much profit potential in the banana industry. He says, "There are many more small farmers joining this industry. The challenge is for the government to help ensure that even for the small farmers, the high quality of our world-class banana exports is maintained and even improved."

George Ibrahim, president of the Banana Industry Development Association based in Cagayan and a key leader of the Chamber of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Industries in Northern Mindanao, says, "Presently he grows to farmers who need less capital per hectare of banana. While we believe sixteenfold banana production is possible, in order to recover the P920,000 per hectare loan it needs, we suggest that a much larger portion of the bankable funds be given to farmers and to reduce banana production, which only needs P320,000 and P130,000 per hectare respectively in addition, the 3-percent added service payable for the loan, the 21-percent annual interest charged on Quedancor loans should be addressed; so that the interest rate decreases to 17 percent."

A suggestion given by banana farmers from the Abyssa agri-farms is for the local government units in direct some of their underutilized agricultural extension workers to teach post and harvest management to banana production areas. A banana a day will not only keep the doctor away. With more DA and LGU support, it will also provide jobs and increased income in impoverished farmers in an area that provides one of the highest returns on investment in agriculture today.

COMMENTARY

For inquiries and suggestions, email agri

LIFESTYLE

Editor
Chelo Banal-Formoso

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'It' boy of Philippine fashion

CURATA describes his clothes as "inspired glamorous." Fashion, he says, should never be too overdone or too muddled. Model wears bias-cut A-line skirt of mauve taffetta and wraparound silk habit blouse with velvet trimmings.

PHILIPPINE fashion designer Ito Curata, and his Hollywood model Sharon Stone

Text by Rina T. Vergara
Photos by Chito Nicino

ITO Curata's meteoric rise in local fashion is nothing short of phenomenal. In three short years, the fashion designer has achieved what some of his colleagues have taken decades to do.

Apart from being one of Persidente Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's preferred designers, he has also been dressing up a growing number of Tinseltown's lowliest such as Lisa Mercado, Angel Locsin, Maribel Ilustre and Cherie Gil.

If there's one person who's the least surprised by the feat, it's Curata himself. He is no overnight success, he says, but the product of years of hard work and luck, which began in 1977 with a scholarship at Clarion State College in Pennsylvania.

His initiation into fashion actually started much earlier. Curata, the fourth of five children from Batangas City, used to hand-sew miniature gowns and capes for his sisters' Barbie dolls.

"I did a year in UP before applying for a scholarship in the US," he says. "I was accepted at Clarion, but I found the place there a bit alien so I decided to transfer elsewhere."

Curata first thought of moving to Parsons in New York. Since he had relatives in the Bay Area, he eventually settled in the West Coast, where he earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts major in painting at the University of San Francisco. That was a little over a decade before he and Sharon Stone would cross paths.

It took him another six years to open his first shop. In the meantime, Curata worked as a trust account officer for a bank in the Bay Area. Through it all, he didn't abandon his dream of becoming a designer. In fact, he was already designing clothes for friends and relatives during his off hours.

Venturing out

When the bank decided to assign him to Los Angeles, the reluctant banker took it as a cue to quit the scene and stay put in San Francisco to pursue his true love. He used his severance pay as seed money to realize his dream. Instead of setting up shop in the downtown area, however, Curata opted to open one across a McDonald's outlet in Daly City (a.k.a. "Kabayo" City because of the huge Filipino American community based there).

"It seemed like the most logical thing to do back then," he says. "Since I was still a struggling designer, I felt I needed an ethnic base. Other than that, I had no idea where the business was headed. I relied purely on my instincts."

As fate would have it, Curata found a receptive market not only among Filipinos, but also among exuberant Latinos, who liked his figure-flattering designs. Since he knew next to nothing about carving and sewing, he took the opportunity to learn the finer points of the craft from his Filipino staff.

TO BOTTOM

IF AUDREY Combre for Audrey Hepburn as Maid Marian, Curata sometimes looks up to Grace Kelly for inspiration. Strapless chiffon green gown with electric-pleated flared is made of stunning silk and adorned with the designer's fancy brooch.

In designing for women with disparate statures and tastes such as Sharon Stone, GMA and 'Darna,' Ito Curata relied on instincts and good old-fashioned hard work

HE considers Pepito Albers, another Filipino designer who first made it big in the US, as one of the country's best. Camel glam to Curata consists of a one-piece lace gown with plunging neckline and adorned with cut beads.

'It' boy of Philippine fashion

THE DESIGNER likes Hubisan, Pierre, Valentino, Dior, Galliano and Lacroix among his idols. His navy-piece black ensemble consists of a silk shantung skirt with ruffles and hints of beadwork and a sleeveless knitted top.

"I soaked up everything like a sponge," he says. "That's one good thing about doing businesses in the US. You learn to multitask because labor is expensive."

Curata didn't mind cleaning Big Mac wrappers and plastic glasses that found their way in front of his shop, but he soon realized after a year that he needed to relocate to San Francisco if he were to get noticed.

He did just that by securing a hole in the wall located between Pacific Heights and Russian Hill, two of the city's most classy neighborhoods. The work area, an industrial affair with an exposed ceiling that revealed a series of pipes hung before the look became in, was located in the basement, just above the shop's show window and reception area.

Again, luck was on Curata's side. Lourdes Lavagnino, a journalist at the San Francisco Chronicle, was casually passing by his shop one day when a mannequin wearing a shift dress caught her attention. She left her business card with an employee and asked for a return call.

"I thought she was selling ad space," says an amused Curata. "I couldn't believe my eyes when she told me that she wanted to write about me and my work."

Curata was swamped with orders soon after the article came out. From that moment on, he became a true believer in media's power to influence people. The exposure also resulted in invitations from fellow designers and owners or publishers for him to join them in their group shows.

Charmed by Stone

That's why when Curata saw an agent from Miramax, he didn't let his proposal go unheeded. The agent wanted to book him up with the then very hot Stone.

Tired of the mind games, the aforementioned designer wanted to give undercover designers a try. Curata promptly sent two gowns to the Los Angeles-based actress and heard nothing from her until a week later.

Stone, who was then busy doing "Last Dance" and promoting "Diabolique," personally called him in San Francisco one afternoon. She gushed over his designs, but expressed the fact that they were a tad too tight on her.

"I thought she was a size 6," says Curata, "but it turned out that she was a size 8. I had to cheap every thing and fly to LA the next day to personally attend to her."

It's not every day a star of Stone's stature calls you via long distance, but Curata managed to remain cool on the phone. The same composure, however, eluded him while waiting for the actress in her ballroom-like bedroom.

"I was so nervous before her arrival," he recalls. "I didn't know what to say."

To the designer's surprise, the supposed diva turned out to be totally different from her on-screen persona. Not only was she genuinely warm, she was totally unaffected as she emerged from the shower with wet hair and nothing but her panties and bathrobe on.

"I don't know whether you leaned here in yet, but you give me the out of a 30-year old," Curata recalls Stone saying. "She then went on to dress how swimsuit some famous designers wore."

Although Stone never got to wear any of Curata's gowns to the Oscars, she ended up wearing one for a magazine cover. He also did a dress or so dresses for her, which the actress wore during special appearances in Europe.

From LA, Curata eventually moved to San Francisco, where her then journalist husband was based. It further allowed Curata to do a number of gowns for her.

Back home

Just when he was almost on the verge of making it big all over the US, Curata decided to scale down his work in 2003. After decades of living in a foreign land, he began to long for home. Despite the accolades, he says, satisfying ego he sooner than being cited in your own country with friends and loved ones by your side.

During a vacation in the Philippines, he wooed the women by doing a bright pastille wedding. He also bumped into Joanne Zigmond (GMA's personal stylist), who requested him to do a number of dresses for the President. The deal, however, didn't materialize until a year later.

By then, Curata had already made up his mind to close his shop in San Francisco and return to the Philippines for good. With his modest savings, he embarked on building a "retirement" home in 2003 (which now also doubles as his shop) in one of Metro Manila's exclusive villages.

He needs to design clothes, he says with a wink, not only to pay the bills, but to keep him sane. Even if he's no longer as driven as he was before, he can't see himself abandoning the business completely.

"To succeed in any field, you have to give it 110 percent," he says. "Obtaining about my designs has caused to become my priority. There's more to life than being a slave to your success."

So what if his clothes don't land on the pages of Vogue or on the red carpet? Ito Curata is happy enough to be given the space to practice his craft and get noticed for it once in a while.

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Crystal-soled and well-heeled

By Cherche V. Floral

HEELED loafers, pilgrim shoes, jewel-tinted wedges and ballerina flats, along with ultimate glam stilettos, boots of all lengths and heights—these are the shoe trends for fall. That much we already know. It's only September, of course, but for true-blue shoe hounds, it's never too soon to find out what looks to snatch not for next spring.

Marciel's Ellis calls it neutral-wear, both staples in summer footwear, will meld with crystals for a fresh treatment. Wedge heels will come in soft, wood, tape, suede with cutout details.

Ostentatia will be hot, with materials like brocade and drapes that take references from Chinese slippers and parodies defying rules of Japanese footwear. Insect and furry motifs, bulge, removable brooches and personalized charms; dramatic jewels and crystals will be the centerpieces of new haute couture heels.

Apparel's influence will be evident in the use of fabrics like voile, chiffon, silk and cotton, as well as feathers and ribbons. Prints will be re-embroidered, with crystals added as value means. Floral motifs and patterns looking back to the psychedelic '70s will make a comeback. Ethnic all-tones and safari—peacock-feathered heels, python and croc skin, animal-shaped heels—will be strong elements.

Comfort will be key, as expert more of those ballerina flats and retro sneakers with sweet sequin patterns. Ribbon, which became popular again with new metallic shapes, will continue to get feminine makeover with more crystal and pearl details. Platform heels and tennis/rose will be equally hot.

Shoe trends

"Crystals will appear a lot in daytime footwear," said Michaela Schuetze, who presented Swarovski's shoe trends for Spring/Summer 2006. Schuetze, segment manager for crystal fashion components, said her team from the crystal company's head office in Austria and the regional office in Singapore were in town last week to hold a crystal workshop on crystal application before local shoe manufacturers. The Philippines was the last leg of their five-city Asian visit.

"Mixing crystals with natural materials like cork, rope, raffia is a hotly new practice."

BUTTERFLY MOTIF
crystal accents
for Via Vavares's
metallic gold sandals

CRYSTAL centerpiece for haute-couture heels, by Via Vavares

BRAIN Tesoro of Tesoro Manila demonstrates how crystals can add luxe to men's shoes.

SEXY heels in brocade with gold rope accent, Swarovski crystals and pearl crystals, by Solve

CRYSTALLIZED: Rainbows, inspired by Swarovski's "Crystal Rainbow" theme for S/S 2006, accent matching earrings, by Happy Duval of Gal Happy

SWAROVSKI'S S/S 2006 trend guide includes peacock-wedge heels.

Swarovski on your shoes? Then the world is at your feet

"LIGHT and Shadow" African-themed leather pin with crystals, by Happy Duval

LOCAL dressmakers and designers try their hand at the Fleur Fix machine at the Swarovski seminar-workshop in Edsa Shangri-La.

Schuetze said, "and these new combinations are very exciting." Crystals will allow for bold, yet not exaggerated, subtly bringing sparkle to a traditional material.

Swarovski's crystal components have been used in the Philippines primarily for bridal fittings, and some few do-it-yourself jewelry lines the company backed up in presence in the country last year. Swarovski has been coming up with projects to demonstrate the versatility of crystals.

"We want projects that will show the practical application of our crystal components," Bernice Quintelino said. The Singapore-based Quintelino is the market manager for North and South-east Asia (Pacific region, and the only Filipino executive in Swarovski's regional office. Swarovski tapped the local shoe industry for its first seminar workshop here, to be followed soon by the Indonesian economy. The company has already been conducting such seminars in IC's neighbors in the past.

Swarovski has a diversified market in the region, according to Quintelino. In Vietnam, crystals are used mostly by jewelers. Both China and Hong Kong manufacturers make use of them in Singapore. Crystallized Jimmy Choos, worth $8,000, are made in Malaysia, where the shoe company has a factory.

With gusto

If crystals have not been widely applied in Philippine shoes, it wasn't for lack of designers' imagination but largely because of lack of technical know-how. In the workshop at the Edsa Shangri-La on Thursday, manufacturers responded with gusto as they were taught hands-on the tested techniques in crystal application—using industrial glue or resin, sewing, heat-press application.

Apart from the Hot Fix machine, a special Swarovski equipment that makes use of heat to press crystals onto shoe fabrics, the participants learned existing downsizing equipment are unusually used to apply the crystals, as purchases of new machines isn't necessary.

Participants included Solve, which customs-made crystallized shoes for the Inaugural Committee of Unwarama with accessories designer Regina Daniel, who also crystallized Big Bang for the Inaugural; Sly Reserve, Toronto Manila, CMG, Jeffe, Manolo, Aurelio, Rusty Lopez, Ambassadress, Glo, Lulu's Bag makers Fina and Inamas were also represented.

As crystal application requires specialized techniques, Crystals don't allow manufacturers to mix materials, Schuetze said how manufacturers can submit materials they wish to admit for testing in their laboratory in Austria.

The company also custom-makes special crystal logos and components, as they do with bag, shoe clients—top labels like Dior, Giuseppe Zanotti, and Stuart Weitzman.

"Crystals make footwear more special, it digitally expressive, depending on how much a used," Quintelino said. "There's no special care required, however, to feel edge the crystals with a damp cloth. They don't lose their shine."

E-mail crystal@inquirer.com.ph

MORE of the crystal treatment, by Via Vavares

BOB ZOOSMADO, Cesar Montano, Hermes Joplonia

ALEX and Sallie Lopez, Lyceum alumni association president Ric Rodrigo, Cocoy Laurel, Chinggoy Alonzo, Lyceum VPAA Kate Belmonte and Bobby Laurel

Party toasts Cesar Montano's smash success

MARJU Francisco and Jose Miguel Cortes

CHAL T. EVP Jenny Duaso and Jo Laurel

MEGA interior designer and landscaper Cocoy Cordoba, admirable Maribel Villaluz-Garcia, Tommy Cordoba and architect Bobby Perdomo (seated) Chit Salud, our host Nene Laurel and Bobby in jeans

EYE-CATCHING Aida Posadas, Carmi Garcia, Ashley Mei Leyag, Bobby Rodrigo, and Bea and Linda Pasternal

FREDERICK Peralta

ELIZABETH Alonso

BONG Pastores

TOASTING Canada and Philippine relations are Sgt. Warren Tomalty of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canadian Ambassador Peter Sutherland, DFA Undersecretary Franklin Drilon and Czech Ambassador Stanislav Slavsky

WHAT'S On and Expat's Bash! Bernard, consul of Monaco Fortune Lustosa and newly appointed consul of Guinea Agnes Hellemans

TIME Magazine executive editor Anthony Spaeth, New Indian Express' Vasu Mathur, Time correspondent Nelly Sindayen, Guatemala consul and rep socialite Mollie Romero Aldaca and husband, business magnate Louis Aldaca

STYLISH Jo Lynne Sutherland runs the Canadian clinic, assisted by Daphne Gaela

MULTI-AWARD-WINNING actor Cesar Montano was Lyceum of the Philippines' Outstanding Alumnus of 2005. Well, palangga, the school conferred on him the prestigious award "in recognition of his critically acclaimed performances in the cinematic magnum opus, 'Kasal,'" the milestone movie of the Philippine Independence Centennial year."

Recently Cesar reaped the best actor, best director and best picture awards in the recent Gawad Urian Awards for his mind-numbing Lithuanian epic, "Panaghoy Sa Tuktok," which, as it was an-other cause to celebrate for the school that is proud of having him in the roster of illustrious alumni, it continues to produce through the years, palangga.

Lyceum's young president, the intelligent and good-looking Roberto P. Laurel, brought together some pals in the academe, business and society for a cool, relaxing dinner at his tastefully decorated Cotterham Gardens home to celebrate Cesar's string of victories.

The honoree came to the dinner with pals from the movie industry. His gorgeous wife, Sandoiwan, was not with him since she's again pregnant and decided to chill it at home.

The menu was excellently prepared by culinary doyen Amanda Barrientos and her superb Via Mare staff.

The many guests were all keen to Cesar talked about behind-the-scenes happenings in his movies.

Wine glasses were raised at the end for the intermittently serialized serut, as well as for Bobby Laurel, and my sister, Lyceum of the Philippines, which continues to produce men and women of distinction.

Me with Cesar and Lyceum mom "Tammy," indeed, palangga.

Birthday with a bang

For society writer Rusty Vergara, a birthday is a perfect excuse to really celebrate, with a bang!

And so it was no surprise at all that several high-profile personalities of Manille society showered his baby, palangga.

The fun happening was superbly organized and hosted by popular emcee-columnist Jody Nene Lozano, with her sister, fashionable Fe Rodriguez; as well as by Lolly Bonoan, Karen Wanamaker, Nini Leyag, musicians Steven Cabrera, Vicky Cachapero, Mabel Manzo, erstwhile Chit Salud, Bobby de Jesus, Marilou Villavicencio, Tessie Amparo, Lydia Reyes, Fe Sy, Linda Pasternal, Carrie Bautista, and cousin Phillie Mitchell, Irma Gotis and Baroness Lindmann.

Nene's well-maintained garden was gorgeously decorated by the talented Cocoy Cordoba to provide the 50s retro look in keeping with the party's theme.

Leading the guests were hosts fashion czar Pitoy Moreno, who was with tall and regal beauty queen Aurora Pijuan; former Sen. Loren Legarda; Mark Villar; popular Pencil, Bobcon Mayor Oliver Antiporda; entertainment columnists Ronnie Weber-hauls, Nini Fabian; Meng Ongkiko; and Celine Bautista. Rusty's pals from the fashion world—designers Gerrie Silva, Danny de la Cuesta, Dennis Bellina and Bobbi Arandia—were there. Aida Posadas was in an eye-catching ball fashion gown, palangga.

On a rare sighting we were super rare Jacoy Ty of the Cebuano City Chamber of Commerce and civic leader Joy Fung; Hyatt hotel's executive chef Sebastian Cramer; top PR honcho Edd Parreno; former club manager Ernest Gonzaga, University of Santo Tomas professor Nicky Lichauco; Antero Pedro, the ADP Industry Corp's marketing manager; fundraising Fenorio Olivo; and PR and events manager Ogie Rodrigues. The hour made sure that Nene Fashion artist floored like heroes during the entire night till past 2 a.m., palangga.

BIRTHDAY boy Rusty Vergara, hostess Cha Singson, Aurora Pijuan, Rei Philips and hostess with the mostess Nene Lozano

The dinner guests were then treated to a dance exhibition by the junior Dancesport champion, keenly watched by the empress of ballroom dancing herself, Bobby Garcia, and namesake, international award-winning professor Nelly Cruz Saavedra.

Arthur Mamaysog got the whole dining area all with his inimitable style, from fashionistas to Fashion Police, to dance with Nene, of course, and has rising singing sensation, Faith Daniela, belted out songs with her powerful voice.

Rusty's birthday was certainly memorable.

GEENA Zaldar-and PAL stewardess Fe Diaso

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Vitu Hingco using Kodak Easy Share

Canadian celebration

Some 500 guests caught a glimpse of Canada during the national day celebration of the Canadian Embassy at the Edsa Ballroom of Hotel Sheraton.

Stage lights duplicated the image of the Northern Lights. There were five-foot tall ice sculptures of the Inukshuk, an aboriginal Canadian tool providing directions for hunting and other indigenous Canadian community activities.

Ritchad is a Inukshuk of the great time when I was in Canada with a Mountie — a real member of the cool Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who joined in from Vancouver.

Entertainment there had to be the awesome yummy Canadian-theme menu: salmon, oysters, Canadian beef and bottles of wine, plus those typical Canadian desserts made from maple syrup.

For extras, there was Fil-Canadian beauty, DJ's Raphee Cheska, who did an excellent job hosting the show and introducing the Filipino-Canadian performers who provided live entertainment, such as the a capella group MM and "Son in a Million" finalist Sylvia Mora. Soprano Joanna Go belted out both national anthems of the Philippines and Canada, which received tremendous applause from the chi-chi guests, palangga.

In his speech, Canadian Ambassador Peter Sutherland mentioned the highlights of Canadian-Philippines relations last year, particularly the successful partnerships in trade and development.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Franklin Drilon noted Canada's 400,000 citizens and residents of Filipino origin, whom he commended for giving solace to both their country of birth and their host country.

WOMEN of substance: Lydia Reyes, Marilou Prieto-Lorena and Lucy Bonoan (seated) Baby de Jesus, Juna Tantoco, Consul Melda Aldaca, Lulu Cancaneda and hostess with the mostess Nene Lozano

FOUNDER Sen. Loren Legarda

AFTERACTIVE Charmaine Cruz

THE FUN PACK. Lulu Bonoan, Kathy Park, Hyatt Hotel's executive chef Hubertus Cramer and soon-to-wed Becky Garcia

INQUIRER Lifestyle columnist Cory Quirino

CARMI Bautista, nineteen Tavares Library, fashion czar Pitoy Moreno and fashion plate Fe Rodriguez